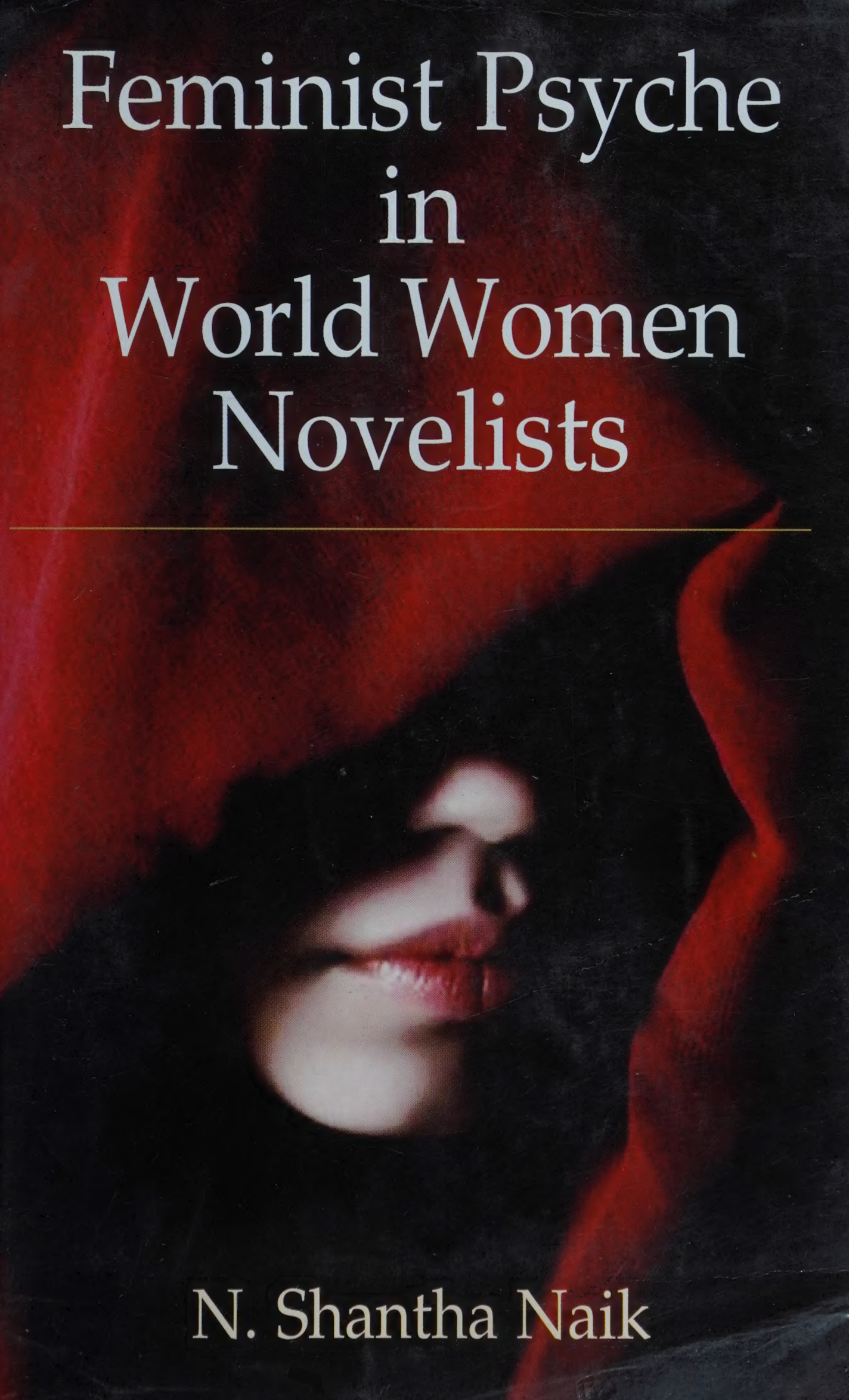
Feminist Psyche in World Women Novelists



N. Shantha Naik

Feminist Psyche in World Women Novelist is a book compiled of more than 15 essays. All essays are new approach to the women authors delt in this book. Feminism is a new movement emerged with new hopes to the women writers, Feminism opened new venus to the women writers to express the age old suppression in the hands of male. Exploitation, suppression and oppressions were common phenomenon in the life of women in this past. They were denied to cast their vote, denied to participate in the family affairs. Women were treated as second class citizens in world scenario. She does not have an identity of her own. She always recognized with her husband or her family names. She cannot live alone like men. Society never allow her to do of her own.

This book tried to bring most of the world feminist writers into a common platform to discuss. It helps the researchers, scholars and those who are working on female study may find first hand informations regarding 'Feminist Psyche'. What made them to take-up the issues of women in their novels. Though the social ambiance is different in the world, but womens problems remain same.

This book is more informative indeed on feminine issues. It is an attempt to bring out many common thinkings together on feminist approach in the world women's novels.

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Edited by

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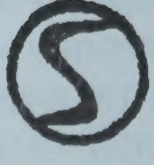

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Preface

Feminist psyche in the world women novelists is a monumental work of different scholars of India. More than 20 different essays enriched this collection with exuberant views. The most discussed movement of contemporary literature is 'Feminism'. It was emerged with French revolution and spread all over the world. The equally half percent of human population was neglect in the name of tradition, culture, religion, and ethos. Women repented that they does not have any shape of their own. They are like fluids which take the shape of the molding. Their inner furry was quenched by their male counterpart. Many countries have not provided an opportunity to vote: which mean that she is not existing. For the first time they registered their presence in the world. George Eliot who was written her novels in pseudo name. This equally half percent of human being were most neglected creatures earlier. Now she realized herself, she is fighting to register her own identity without her father or her male-counterpart. Some of the women have no freedom at all. Thought their husband invites the guest, asked wife to prepare snacks they never asked their wives to sit with them. Many women expressed their inner urge and conflicts in their novels.

Feminism is great movement created its impact all over the world. Women writers of the world have used all genre of literature. Poetry, drama, short fiction, stories

fiction etc. A feminist wave was spread all over the world not only female writers even male also equally written on feminist consciousness. It created a sensation in the readers. The movement influenced to bring new change in the social cultural and political life of women worldwide. Black feminism is a new trend recently emerged to bring a new change in the life of black women. Eco-feminism and Indian women's life has some relevance. Woman has connection with nature, rain, tree, field and agriculture are synonymous with woman in India. The major work force of agriculture is female. When modern technologies were introduced, tractor, cultivator, harvesting machine, winnowing machine, causes to keep away women from all these work. It led female infanticide in Punjab and decrease in female population across India. Dowry harassment, exploitation are the common phenomenon in women's life not only in in India, but also in golbal scenario.

At this juncture, Feminist psyche in world Women's Fiction is most relevant and appropriate work. It provides enormous of information to those who do research and who are working in feminine perspectives. I am very much thankful to all contributors, Sarup Book Publishers Pvt. Ltd., for publishing this monumental work. I would like to extend many sincere thanks to those who helped me to edit this work.

Dr. N. Shantha Naik

26.11.2011 Mysore

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1

Feminist psyche in world Diaspora

Dr. N. Shanthan Naik

Certain instances persuade me to take up this title and edit the book. When I was reading IXth class book of history to teach my son I read French revolution and role of women in the revolution Latter on some two years my reading of Charles Dickens's novel Tale of Two Cities to teach third semester students really influenced me to think regarding feminism. A leading poet of 1 ih Century Vachana Movement Goggawwe 12th writes:

> Calls female when breast arises
> Calls male when mustache grows
> Inner knowledge neither female nor male
> Nistinatha?

She raised a genuine question of freedom. It indicates that male chauvinist exploited women. We have two liberated ladies in the age of Vedas. Maitreyi and Gargi two scholars enjoyed equal privileges with men. The concept of Ardhanarishwara, in which Lord Shiva is the combination of both male and female entity; half of his

body part occupied by female who is his better half Parvathi. He gave a place in his head to his second wife Ganga. The Indian ethos and traditions changed when Manu the giver of the Hinu laws restricted and crubbed all female liberations and put her in the cage. Before that we have evidence to accept that; woman was given an important place in the Indian social life. Adishankthi who is the beginner of the life. Mother causes for all births on the earth. But why she has been cabined and caged like this? Many women struggled hard to know the reason and to fight against this injustice.

My father never tolerate torture by my brother-in-laws to my sisters who had never given any freedom to my mother. It is obvious in the Indian social scenario. Because, for centuries human experiences have been synonymous with the masculine experiences, which made the collective message of humanity one sided and incomplete. Women has not been defined as a subject in her own right, but merely entity that concerns man either in his real life or in his fantasy life. This situation has continued to remain the same. What have shaped the feminine perspective differently from the concerned or parallel developments in the western culture and in the Indian continent are differences in dress, in attitudes, in cultural behaviours and family structures. In addition to that the feminist movement in its initial stages was submerged in the freedom struggle. In France women started a revolution along with men in 1798. Perhaps that was the mark of feminine sensibility but when we come to Indian context, it goes back to 12th century. It is proud to say that the Vacvhana movement which was started at Basavakalyana under the leadership of Alamaprabhu and Basavanna who were the most secular thinkers. Before Vachana movement Bhagavan Budha thought of the idea of liberation to the women But Budha's preaching was neglected.

Feminism is a collective movement aimed at defining, establishing and defending equal political economic and

social rights and equal opportunities for women. Feminism mainly focused on women's, issues, but because feminism seeks gender equality, some feminists argue that men's liberation is therefore a necessary part of feminism and that men are also harmed by sexism and gender roles.

Feminist activists have campaigned for women's rights such as in contract, property, and voting while also promoting women's rights to bodily integrity and autonomy and reproductive rights. They have opposed domestic violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault. If we go back to the history of feminism the first wave of feminism traced back to the 19th and early 20th century. In U.K. and U.S. It was focused on the promotion of equal rights, contract marriage, parenting and property rights for women. However, by the end of the 19th century activists primarily focused on gaining political power, particularly the right's of women's suffrage though some feminists were active in campaigning for women's sexual reproductive and economic rights. The Britain's Austrelian colonies, New Zeealand and South Australia granting women right to vote in 1893, and 1905. In Britain these women activists demanded for women's vote the result was 1918's representation of People Act was passed granting vote to women. In the U.S. movement was led by Lucretia Mott, Elizebath Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Who each campaigned for the abolition of slavery prior to the championing women's right to vote and were strongly influenced by 'Quaker' thought.

The second wave feminism began to be used to describe a newer feminist movement that focused as much on fighting social and cultural inequalities as political inequalities. Many new trends emerged in feminism and the movement spread over the world like a wild fire. Chinese feminists called for women's liberation from traditional roles and Neo-Confucian gender Segregation. Later, the Chinese communist party created projects aimed at integrating women into the workforce and claimed the revolution had successfully achieved women's liberation.

In 1899 Qasim Amin, considered the father of Arab feminism wrote, 'The Liberation of Women', When argued for legal and social reform for women. Hada Shaarawi founded the Egyptian feminist union in 1923. The Iranian constitutional Revolution in 1905 triggered the Iranian women's movement, which aimed to achieve women's equality in education, marriage, careers, and legal rights. However, during the Indian revolution of 1979, many of the rights that women had gained from the women's movement were systematically abolished.

The third wave feminism: Second-wave Feminism is a feminist movement beginning in the early 1960's and continuing to the present, and it coexist with third-wave feminism. Second wave feminism is largely concerned with the issues of equality other than suffrage, such as ending discrimination. They sees women's cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and as reflecting sexist power structure.

In the early 1990s third-wave feminism began as a response to perceived failures of the second wave. The third-wave feminism seeks to challenge or avoid that it deems the second wave and essentialist definitions of feminism. They focused on 'micro-politics' and challenge the second wave's paradigms to what is, or is not, good for women and tend to use a post-structuralist interpret of gender and sesualy, feminist leaders rooted in this movement as Gloria Anzaldua, Bell Hooks, Chela Sandioval etc.

Existing Theoretical Schools of Feminism in the World Scenario

Feminist theory is an extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical fields. It encompasses work in a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, economic, women's studies, literary criticism, art history, psychology, and philosophy.

Feminist theory aims to understand gender inequality

and focuses on gender politics, power relations and sexuality. As American literary critic and feminist Elaine Showalter describes the phased development of feminist theory, as 'feminist critique' and 'gynocriticsm' in which the woman is producer of 'textual meaning' including the psychodynamics of female creativity, linguistics and the problems of a female language.

Divergens of the Movement on the Basis of its Ideology

On the political and economic aspects of ideology the movement is further divided as liberal feminism which seeks individualistic equality of men and women through political and legal reform without altering the structure of the society. Radical feminism considers the male-controlled capitalism hierarchy as the defining feature of women's oppression and the total uprooting and reconstruction of societv as necessary social feminism connects oppression of women exploitation, oppression and labour. Marxist feminism feels that overcoming class oppression, overcomes gender oppression. The newly emerging feministic trends are eco-feminism: Vandanashiva claims that women have a special connection to the environment through their daily interactions with it that has been ignored. "Women in subsistence economics, producing and reproducing wealth in partnership with nature, have been experts in their own right holistic and ecological knowledge of nature's processes. Eco-feminism probably emerged from Nariva Swamp issue Trinida and Tobago in 1990. Most of the tribal women in Indian were not knowing the concept of ecofeminism. Because they have more intimacy with the nature to the men.

Chipko movement in India is very good example for that. We have othertwo great names which with stand today in India are, Salumarada Timmakka, Tulasigowda, most of the time tribal women goes to the forest to collect woods and loaded on their head to sale in the city. Strange

fruits available in the forest also one of the day-dealing for their livelihood. Most probably they were the earliest feminists of the world.

Cultural Feminism: attempts to revalidate 'female nature'. Sojourners Truth's 1851 speech to American feminists, is land mark in natural Feminism. Similarly religious feminisms like, Christian feminism, Island Feminism, Jewish feminism etc are emerged recently in the world scenario.

History of Feminism

As the feminist movement goes back to its history we can trace its beginning in the west with the French Revolution. 'Mary Wollstonecraft' published 'The Vindication of the Rights of Women' only three years later. The first event symbolized the beginning of liberty, equality and fraternity for the whole of mankind, the second stood for freedom from the trammels of tradition for equality to women with men for the better half of the mankind.

In 1869 John Stuart Mill published 'Subjection of Women' a very persuasive and well-reasoned book which exerted great influence on feminist movement. However, the movement developed rather by slow degrees. Charlotte Bronte condemned extensively the social system, which brought up girls to regard marriage as their sole destiny. In a letter dated 1st April 1845, addressed to her friend Ellen Nessey, Bronte wrote, 'Not that it is a crime to marry, or a crime to wish to be married-but it is an imbecility which I reject with contempt for women who have neither fortune nor beauty to make marriage the principal object of their whishes and hopes the aim of all their action-not to be able to concern themselves that they are unattractive and that they had better be quiet and think of thing than wedlock"[1]. This revolt gradually spread over the world. Today feminism is more or less a worldwide phenomenon though it began in England. The American women were probably the first to wage

a hard long-fought battle for equal rights and break into previously barred professions and with the right to equal education with men, to speak in public, to right for, to hold office, and to own property.

It is surprising and noteworthy that despite its wide popularity in Europe and America and with the younger...

Generations of the moneyed classes in cosmopolitan cities in India, feminism has not been defined in precise froms, though most people have an idea of what it means i.e., emancipation of woman in three fields namely:

Political
Economical and
Social.

Political emancipation means the power to vote as well as the right to assume office. The kind of emancipation was attained long ago. Now women have attained economic emancipation too. They have the right to hold property in their names and claim an equal right to hold property in their names and claim an equal share in father's property with her brothers. Social emancipation covers more than one thing. It includes freedom from outdated traditions and meaningless customs; which act as shackles against what they want to do. Today these are no constraints on the courses in the field of education that they take up. They are free to leave their parents home and lead an independent life. However, women are not completely emancipated from sexual taboos. In the Scandinavian countries free sex before marriage is allowed. In some other countries occasional, extramarital love affairs after marriage take place. A rational solution is yet to be found to the problem of determining what kind of sexual morality would be best form the point of view of general health and happiness. This is no doubt a problem for sociologists to find solution for double standards.

"Most people would Agree, says Bertrand Russell, that sex relation is better when it has a large physical element

than when it is purely physical... most moderns would agree that lore should be an equal"[2]. If this is accepted, polygamy will have to be ruled out. If not, at least it can be considered as an ideal system. Women were looked upon as temptresses by Christian fathers. But the decay of the idea of sin in modern times has again began to give freedom to women. The social emancipation of women is of primary importance as far as their morals and marriages are concerned. The demand of social equality between men and women naturally concerned itself with sexual morality. The feminists wanted to impose on men the moral letter under which only women had chafed so long. The world war I provided women greater opportunities to work with men under the exigency of war conductions particularly in England and America. Modern feminists are no longer so anxious as.

The feminists of thirty years ago to curtail the 'voices' of men are, their predecessors sought equality in moral freedom. Primarily the modern Indian feminists movement may be said to have began with Raja Ram Mohan Roy's success in making the East India company Government pass a bill making it illegal and punishable for a widow to burn herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. Later, the Brahmasamaj and Aryasamaj worked for the upliftment of women. In Maharastra Ramabai Rande did a laudable work for upliftment of women. Gyothi Baphule 'and his wife are remarkable and remembered in the Indian social scene. Later, into the political Sphere stepped women like Sarojini Naidu, Vijayalaxmi Pandit and others who fought shoulder to shoulder with men for political freedom under Gandhiji's leadership. Before this National freedom movement, many Indian women fought against British rule, and the foreigner's intrusion. They are, Ullala's Rani Abbakkadevi, Kitturu Rani Chennamma, Jhansi Rani Lakshmibai and many others. This shows that once Indian women had no bar in their social life. But in the letter stage's socially woman's voice became mute, the term 'silence' is a part of the constitution of female identity, that subjectivity is a crucial factor to women. As Sophocles

says, "silence' gives the proper grace to women'[3] How long this grace be tolerated and preserved too. Today women speak on sufferings in the patriarchal order. That is why the culture may prefer tham to be silent.

The concept of silence recurs in women's writings. Women writers have proved themselves as silent protesters. They have given vent to their feelings of protestation in their writings. Since this collection explore the feminist 'psyche' in worldwide phenomenon it is important to have glance at most neglected society of the world. The Indian society has double standard towards woman. Manu a setter of code and conduct for Hindu society ex laims that, 'Woman is protected by her father in infancy, by husband in youth, by children in old age. She has no freedom of any kind'. These words have been practically practiced in Indian Hindu orthodox society. All through the ages she has been confined to home. The ever-obedient and ever, suffering Sita who ended her life in self immolation remains the dominant feminine archetype. The dhrama of the Hindu woman has always been not to exist. So to a modern Hindu writer the ideal Indian woman is the one who states categorically: "The metaphysical nothingness of woman can hardly be divorced from the social realist of the Hindu caste hierarchy in which woman is always a low caste, a sudra as the Bagvad Gita," engions, and consequently has no right to renounce the world"[4]. Limitation is imposed on woman for family function.

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4. Bhagathgeetha.

2

Feminine Sensibility in Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe and Mistress

Alice Cherrian

"Postcolonial feminist literature has always carried the heavy burden of dealing with, not to say unraveling layers of misinterpretation of traditions and religions. The centre of this dilemma is the role of woman and her, economical and social (in) dependence. In the traditional postcolonial society, the problematic question is of women's emancipation and its women writers are more passionate and serious about it. In this writing, postcolonial Indian women authors have not only exhorted an exposition of the patriarchal ideologies and their oppressive tendencies towards feminist growth and expression, but have also envisioned ways of counteracting those attitudes. They analyze their varying ideals of feminist emancipation in relation to the roles, the communities play in aiding or in obstructing feminist freedom. Meanwhile we have to note both the first and second generation of Indian women writers have also contributed to the constantly evolving and often self questioning body of literature, as they have

taken up various themes like that of language, identity-nostalgia, loyalty, and social and cultural adaptability.

Women writing in English in India emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century, soon after English was introduced into the anthapuras of some aristocratic liberal Indians. As women started writing in English; poems, stories and novels all came together sporadic and hesitant. The larger challenges in intellectual, socio-cultural reconstruction, multi-dimensional redefinition of women's image, role and status, that were part of the wide-spread social movements of the entire 19th century, gave women's writing clear focus and purpose. The society's serious involvement with defining women's relation with the patriarchal state, society and tradition—which were multilayered and highly complex—lead to significant political and cultural crisis. The women writing of the 19th and early 20th century reflects these concerns gradually moving to clear feminist perspective and a sense of a separate sub-culture within the male dominated main culture.

Today women lead a new consciousness in the realm of literature. Their immense contribution to English literature in general and fiction in particular is worth noticing and praiseworthy. Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Santha Rama Rau, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Geeta Mehta, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, Bharati Mukherjee, Mahasweta Devi, Manju Kapoor and many more have left their indelible imprint on the reader of Indian fiction in English. These women writers have made rich and significant contribution to the Indo-English novel and have established a tradition of feminine writing identifiable by the presence of some common features. Their novels do not read like second hand copies of their western counterparts, but is marked by a freshness, originality and solid cultural vigor and sensibility that are recognizably Indian and yet international in their implications and significance.

Anita Nair and Feminism

According to Elaine Showalter:

> "It was through the women's liberation movement that we began to draw connections between our own work and our own lives, to note the disparities between the identifications and ambitions that had attracted us, along with thousands of other women, to the study and teaching of literature, and the limited and secondary roles granted to fictional heroines, women writers or female scholars. Feminism spoke to our lives and our literary experience with the fierce urgency of a revelation or a great awaking"[1].

The same awakening seeped to the reading of literature. Feminist criticism emerged as an offshoot of the women's liberation movement, sharing its polemical force"and activist commitment. Its central hypothesis was and is that gender is a crucial determinant in the production, circulation and consumption of literary discourse. Literary criticism and literary theory have traditionally been guarded male-dominated areas. It was taken for granted that the representative reader, writer or critic of literature was male. The feminist criticism protested against this 'exclusion of women, this misogyny and the movement provided the impetus.

Feminist literary criticism offers new readings of literature, re-evaluating literary expressions by both women and men, documenting the impact of sexist assumptions on writers, challenging literary judgments that deny the female voice and an equal role with the male. Women has not been defined as a subject in her own right but merely as an entity that concerns man either in his real life or in his fantasy life. There has existed, all the same a distinctively female literary tradition grown out of the anxieties of a women's life, even though systematic subject-derivation of women has been a fact as much in life as in literature. Therefore, Feminist writer

seeks to analyze and understand the material conditions through which gender has been constructed within specific languages and bodies of literature.

Of all the contemporary Indian English novelists, Anita Nair is perhaps, the most perceptive explorer of women's world, especially that of Indian women, convulsed by an acute sense of helplessness in the face of the onslaughts of an unfeeling world and the resultant mental agony. Anita Nair has been a very serious Indian English woman novelist who has depicted different aspects of woman's life especially the middle class woman's life in her novels. Anita Nair has refused to be labeled as a feminist writer. Far from taking a feminist stand, thereby fighting against the patriarchal society and male domination, she takes a balanced view of life from a woman's point of view by bringing in all the feminine sensibility. When asked about her books which deal with feminist issues so poignantly, she labels them as 'incidental'. She classifies herself as story-teller a writer of literary fiction; a writer who tries to blend literature and story from generic point of view and absolutely not feministic. For her the issues of gender are not important, for she doesn't write to do this or do that, but has a story to tell, and explores certain issues that are important to her. Metaphorically, her books have taken her place and have made her to think what writing can do and what she can do as a writer.

In contrast to her opinion, her novels like "Ladies Coupe" and "Mistress" sees to be championing the cause of according equality to women. The view embodied in her novels is that the same code of morality be applied to both men and women. In "Ladies Coupe" she has taken up for treatment the theme of estrangement in marriages, issues of pre-marital and extra-marital affairs. Whereas "Mistress" is a literary tour de force from one of India's most exciting writers. She writes about man-woman relationships and complex kathakali aesthetics with equal felicity. When you put down the novel, you

feel as if you are walking back home in the pale early morning light at the end of a nightlong kathakali performance. As well we can notice that self assessment to be the main Concern of Anita Nair. In all her novels, she is in search of meaning and purpose of life in relation to the individual's existence.

Before embarking upon a discussion of her two novels- *Ladies Coupe* and *Mistress*- it will be proper to define the term "Sensibility". M.H. Abramhams defines it thus: "When a modem critic talks of a poet's sensibility, he refers to his characteristic way of responding in sensation, thought and feeling of experience"[2], If therefore a writer's characteristic way of responding to experience is from feminine perspective, he may be regarded as possessing feminine sensibility, and the possession of feminine sensibility presupposes not only full familiarity, but also empathy with feminine problems and crisis. When individuals travel across half the globe from India to America, it can 'alter one's belief and affect one's belief and affect one's perspective"[3], but the reality is women are even today restricted by male domination. It is a phase in which, many novels of the different writers show,women are questioning the system and "groping for their identities and their status both in the family set-up and the larger social structure"[4].

Nevertheless, the one theme that underlies Anita Nair's novels is the question of finding, and then asserting the identity, then a constant search mainly by the protagonists, for the answer to the question like "Who am I?", "Do I have a personality of my own?" or "Do I have just to be what others want me to be or what I imagine myself to become?". Moreover, we witness a conflict, internal and external, in this process of defining, discovering and affirming their self-identity, once they realize what they actually stand for. Although the degree may vary, the female protagonist of Nair's novels exhibit eventually an assertion; a direct or indirect statement of they being self-styled, self motivated and independent

thinking individuals, geared up for facing all the consequences of that assertion and never give up. This quest for assertive identity has been a continuous process evolving with each novel Anita Nair has come up with.

Ladies Coupe

Ladies Coupe is a very powerful novel delineating feminine sensibility, despite the fact that this delineation is chiefly expressed through the projection of the crisis of social norms and inner urge for freedom. Akhila, the female protagonist in the novel, symbolizes the heightened feminine sensibility of the novel. The novel is about the journeys women take in their own lives. The novel is structured in such a way that, it lends itself to metaphor the women's journey. According to Anita Nair, the book as a novel is in parts because there are five short stories interwoven into it. There is a single narrator, whose perspective is the overriding perspective of the novel. Thus, the novel may be seen as collection of parables on the inability of women to relate the inner with the outer, the individual with society. It is an attempt to understand variegated personal relationships through the characters Akhila meets.

No wonder then, that Anita Nair's engrossing *Ladies Coupe* rises what many readers might consider taboo questions about the role of woman in contemporary postcolonial India. Nair's India suffers from a system of sex role stereotyping and oppression of women that exist under patriarchal social organization. Of course, patriarchy, in its different forms has tried in many ways to repress, debase and humiliate women especially through the images represented in cultural; and traditional forms.

Ladies Coupe deals with such issues which ask fundamental questions that not only shake the ideological grounds of man's patriarchal role in a traditional society, but also imply the existence of an alternative reality. Put differently, the novel questions whether the role of Indian women -as a representative of other women living under

oppressive patriarchal systems in relation to culture resistance should be restricted only to their roles as wives and mothers. In such a world woman's role is limited to reproduction regardless of her own desires and needs.

The Brahmin heroin Akhila, whose life has been taken out of her control, is forty-five years old 'spinster', daughter, sister, aunt and the only provider of her family after the death of her father. Getting fed up with these multiple roles, she decides to go on a train journey away from her family and responsibilities, a journey that ultimately make her a different woman. She tries to change the course of her life and family substantially. But it is not possible as she lives in a predetermined world. Neither she is free to realize her goals, nor to translate her dreams into realities. Akhila, with sans husband, children, home and family, is dreaming of escape and space. Hungry for life and experience, aching to content, she sets out for a journey.

Anita Nair chooses a ladies-only, train compartment as the setting of the novel because the discussion in coupe is predominantly preoccupied with issues of women's equality. The ladies coupe of the Indian Railways was based on the assumption that one sex was weaker than the other, and needed to be protected from wandering eyes and hands. Six women locked themselves in safety and respectability in the mysterious coupe, while the multitudes shoved and pushed in the rest of the train. In all female Ladies coupe she meets five other women, each of whom has a story to tell. The stories are all an attempt to answer Akhila's problematic question: Can a woman stay single and be happy at the same time?

Each chapter of the novel is devoted to one of the woman's story: Janaki,the old woman whose relationship with her husband is a 'friendly love', Margaret,the Chemistry teacher, who succeeds 'disciplining' her narcissistic husband/principal; Prabha,the rich submissive wife who loves swimming because it metaphorically gives her a sense of achievement; Sheela, the fourteen year old

whose understanding of her dying grandmother paves the way for her own future liberation; and Marikolanthu, whose rape, literally and metaphorically, coupled with extreme poverty and class-exploitation is the culmination of all other stories.

Each of the women is finely drawn, each caught in a net of relationships partly of her own making and partly one that is 'made' for her. All these stories form a kind of mirror in which Akhila may see her reflection made whole so that she may move to grasping the happiness she has a right to. At the very end, Akhila is empowered to reclaim her lost love. Six women being in one compartment provides the framework and holds the story together like a ribbon holding a bouquet of different kinds of flowers of different shapes, colours and fragrances.

Primarily *Ladies Coupe* is the story of Akhila, who happens to be the most subdued, rather crushed member of the family. Akhila is like a catalyst whose presence is never noticed, never appreciated and yet whose absence may make all the difference. Akhila is a woman lost in the jungle of her duties; sometimes to her mother, at other times to her brothers and still at other times to her sister. She is expected to be an obedient daughter, affectionate and motherly sister and everything but an individual. As a woman Akhila has her dreams, her desires, but when her dreams come in conflict with the comforts of her family it is she who has to sacrifice. She lives a life designated by the society or family. On few occasions she listens to the voice of her innermost being and then she appears a rebel. In fact, her character appears to be a continuum of nothingness and being. On this continuum, nothingness shades into her being very slowly and occasionally. Even Virginia Woolf was aware of the complexity of a character and therefore, she saw character as a flux arid wanted to "record the atoms as they fall upon the mind"[5]. Akhila's character meanwhile lends an occasionally prickly but always sympathetic centre to the

book and the sleeping car, which teems with memories from her own life and visions of the lives she might have led.

This wonderfully atmospheric, deliciously warm novel takes the reader into contemporary India revealing how the dilemmas that women face in their relationships are same world over. In telling these women's stories Anita Nair demonstrates convincingly that she is a writer committed to highlighting the travails and contradictions of women's lives, the sacrifices and choices required to build a relationship, a marriage and a family. Her strength as a writer lies in bringing alive the everyday thoughts, desires and doubts of these six ordinary women. What comes under pressure in Nair's novels is the opposition between ideological appearance-represented in a mythic and metaphysical understanding of the material world-and reality represented in the material oppression of women of low caste and their sexuality.

Ladies Coupe deconstructs that which is taken for granted the sacred, the traditional, and the ideological. Akhila is not given the opportunity by her family to get married and have a family; she is rather expected to provide. Akhila is still a spinster as she has to provide and the Brahmin traditions in this case become flexible.Marikolanthu, a low-caste woman is raped and unsurprisingly, she is to blame: "Why does a young woman walk alone?"It is pleasing to note that Anita Nair observes the uneducated, poor and rural women, like Marikolanthu, who boldly reject traditions that define their lives in dependent relationship with men more strongly than the educated and urban women reject those traditions. Through this depiction, Nair criticizes the rubric of formal education that reinforces the patriarchal conditioning in men and women. She asserts that education can empower and liberate women only when it is aimed at changing social attitudes. In fact, in Nair's writing, the restructuring of male-female relationships that can brings changes in social and interpersonal attitudes,

becomes the most important basis of feminist emancipation.

The struggle of educated and rich women for emancipation is not the same like that of an uneducated and poor woman. Marikolanthu's greatness lies in her struggle for emancipation in spite of being poor and illiterate; She can be called as an Indian version of Ibsen's Nora. None can fail to admire her gradual growth through experience from docility to defiance, defiance to full confidence. Although not formally educated in a school or college, she is rigorously trained in the university of adversity. Thus she succeeds in her flight with the preconceived notions of gender-roles and develops the existential courage to be herself.

By narrating the stories of these six women, Nair moves them from a state of passivity and absence into a state of active presence, from the kitchen and the bedroom to the street and the world at large. These are the stories which together make a single story, of women rediscovering themselves. The coupe becomes a metaphor for a utopian world that is liberated from patriarchy, one that is not characterized by false binaries. Hence the conscious action taken by Akhila at the end of the novel, an action that aims to overcome the contradictions that are characteristic of the traditional world and its essential determinant called alienation. Inspite of the difficulties and obstacles caused by the patriarchal society, these five women endeavor to channelize their emotions in different ways because of their strong urge to survive. Having entered a chakravyuha from which there is no escape, they want to make the best of their given life by hardening themselves to face the harsh realities of life. Anita Nair has thus offered an affirmative vision thereby upholding the ultimate goodness, beauty and truth of life in *Ladies Coupe.*

Mistress

On the other hand *Mistress* is a very powerful novel

delineating feminine sensibility. Despite the fact that this delineation is chiefly expressed through the projection of one theme i.e. the crisis of conscience and values. Radha, the female protagonist in the novel, dominates this entire theme. Radha is married to Shyam, a detached, solar, industrious businessman who is unable to recognize and understand the female sensibility. Her relationship with her husband is characterized by loneliness and lack of understanding whereas her husband is pseudo moralist, a rotund, and minute-minded and naturally she gets bored of him. There is an attempt to understand personal relationships through the character of Radha. An intimate rapport with Shyam, her husband is possible only if Radha tries to re-adjust her inner realities to the outside 'meaningless' world. The novel develops from the germinating idea that it would be impossible to go on living in a state of inner contradictions. A sensitive individual will have to make a sacrifice of giving a part of oneself to make way for a meaningful personal relationship.

Radha's inner most urge for Christopher is to identify herself with 'right yes'. She almost "Says 'right no' to the order and norms of social life with Shyam. But she is not fully prepared to go to that extent of defying the ordinariness of her existence. Radha meekly submits shaym does wish to take her back to home. But she is determined to wage a ceaseless, 'battle between his brand of courage and hers'. Radha is a woman of aggressive and unadjusting character. She is married to Shyam. Though Shyam and Radha remind us of Krishna and Radha of the Mahabharata, they are ironical names. They are mentally separated being under the same shelter. If Shyam goes east ward, Radha opts for the west. She is reserved and emotionally active. She does not like the members of family bossing over her. Instead she dominates over, including her husband. When Shyam advises her how to become a conformist she hates him.

The novel explores the depth of relationship between

Shyam and Radha. In their relationship we find that Radha's role as a wife blocks her freedom. Beauvoir believed that the institution of marriage has marred the spontaneity of feelings, between the husband by "transforming freely given feelings into mandatory duties and shrilly asserted rights"[6]. A woman is more than her body. She is not only a Being-in-itself but also a Being-for-itself. Radha's alienation under the rubrics of sexuality is on account of Shyam's cold intellectuality. The entire pulsating and throbbing world around Shyam serves to deepen her love for Chris. Radha's contact with Shyam never went deeper than skin. She is unable to satiate her sexual urge because of Shyam's aloofness, and this leads her into Chris arms. Nair, who is a sensitive writer, can delve deep into people's personalities and take the reader on a wonderful journey of relationship. In *Mistress*, some bonds grow and other breaks and in these intertwining relationships lies the beauty of Anita's saga.

Radha rejects her husband's oppressive environment and she rebels against the false materialism and vulgarity of society. She even virtually rejects her marriage. She distrusts love as a form of male possessiveness and does not want love to be an aspect of male domination. Radha who had a pre-marital affair with a married man, had an abortion. Later her post-affair with Christopher, she grapples for the true sense of love, completely divorced from the sense of guilt. As she travels back to her uncle life she confronts many harsh truths of her own past. To the agitated self of Radha who is fed up with ugly life, she has a strong desire to find out an order, an answer to the inner query. She tries to explore the past of her uncle, as well as, Christopher who are so closely connect with her mysterious past. She wants to understand the secret behind Christopher's visit and her uncle's procrastination to narrate his own life storty. She plunges into the past and many realizations occur to her. In the process of knowing her past, she is transformed into a new being. This transformation gives her the inner strength to submit to Shaym's wish to take her back to home.

Mysteries are an indictment against men who believe in holding their women in their grip. It is a statement against women who take pride in their servility; it's again an indictment against men who trade in marriages as a means of increasing money and power. It is a strong statement male-chauvinism, female apathy and reluctance and it is a woman's voice for freedom and emancipation. In cultural firmament of India which is undergoing vast change, now one finds that there are good, bad, monstrous and erratic specimens of women ranging from film actresses, models, house-wives to the fallen sisters of Gandhi. In this background, women like Radha in Mistress, Janaki, Prabha and Margaret in Ladies Coupe occupy a unique place. Being sensitive and having spent their childhood in comfortable conditions of parental care, it was expected that their marital life should be wholesome and happy. But, it could not come about, mainly on account of their sensitiveness and an inner urge to carve their own identity.

It is very inteteresting to watch how an individual is an ever a captive of his attitude and intentions. Radha's search for physical interaction and gratification or that of Koman-her uncle-for recognition is no different from Akhila's search for meaning in life. They want an alternative definition of this world, its inhabitants and their own life. The crisis that Nair presents is that of the whole, "women" race. It is the difference between 'is' and 'ought'. We may supposedly define 'is' but the 'ought to' part always evades clarification. Anita Nair, through her two novels, *Ladies Coupe* and *Mistress* questions our hopeless certainty at our imagined knowledge of worldly wisdom, our false joy in unproductive routine of life, in short, our state of being. Radha's character precisely synthesises what Anita wants to convey. Even through Akhila's character she depicts the compromise between what 'is' and 'what ought to be' the struggle before us and the efforts which we should harness to sermount the struggle. This approach to her novels truly

point out Anita Nair's place as a forerunner to fight for the cause of women's liberation movement in India and abroad.

Ladies Coupe and Mistress: Portraitures of Indian Women

Ladies Coupe and *Mistress* are a great contribution to the construction of the female self. Women marginalized as trivial, ghettoized as militant and subversive, and downgraded as convicted with victim syndrome, Nair's writing has successfully found a place for itself in voicing the experience of half of humanity. She advocates the freedom, liberty and emancipation of women in order to extricate them from obsequious servitude and inhuman torture to which they are subjected by their husbands, mother-in-laws and others. Her novels espouses and voices the need of emancipation and education of Indian women and hence its reformist objective is fore-grounded in her novels. Anita Nair's woman characters in her novels rebel against patriarchal community in order to explore their own terms, regardless of the consequences that such a rebellion may have on their lives. They take the position of "outsiders" to fight and criticize those cultural ideologies that come in their way of becoming free individuals. Self-chosen withdrawal for these women, takes on the form of a weapon for survival in a patriarchal community. Yet breaking away from the communal life eventually makes them realize the futility of being outsiders as it fails to make them 'complete'. Thus, Nair's women characters find freedom not by living in their own narrow selfs or by clinging to others by connecting with others and by simultaneously asserting their intellectual, as well as, economic independence. They strive for a balance created by the harmonious individualistic existence within the community of men and women.

Anita Nair has also projected her own Indian sensibility and attitude through her women characters in her novels. Most of the Indian women living in an

orthodox and conservative family feel inhibited to raise their voice against aggressive dominance of the male person of the society owing to their inferiority complex and rigid code of conduct imposed on them. Their ambitions, desires, sense and sensibility are faithfully expressed in Nair's novels. Her novels show how such women in spite of being highly educated undergo psychological suffering due to inferiority complex and dead sense of inhibitions. She not only limits her writing to upper class urban people, but also picks up characters from all stratum of society. Her theme is not only restricted to domestic problems, but it is variegated in nature. Besides, her novels represent what is authentically Indian or native.

Nair's *Ladies Coupe* and *Mistress* are about the possibilities of exploring changes within oneself. Her woman protagonist like Akhila and Radha are always willing and receptive for redefining attitudes and relationships shorn of undue romantic embellishments that want to free themselves from the stultifying traditional concerns and cherish a spontaneous surge towards life. The spontaneity of life arrives only with a cessation of over-eager planning and openness to change. One can trace the struggle of a woman protagonist to seek a meaningful definition of life. She vociferously puts forth the private truth about what woman want. Her women feel their emotions strongly, yet retain a constant value judgment, about themselves as well as, about other relationships they have to live through. Though they belong to different stratum of society, they do possess an inner independence to experiment with their life. In the process, life yields self-knowledge which imparts them the strength of accepting that a woman desire to succeed like an individual is not incompatible with her desire for love or small pleasures of domesticity. However Nair is excellent in depicting the inner furies of women and their rising tone for emancipation and empowerment.

One can say Nair's *Ladies Coupe* and *Mistress* are

portraitures of Indian women who rebel against the tradition bound old mode of life in the light of the western liberty. In transforming her experience in the form of art, Nair use of visual details and an impressionistic style is an attempt to convey a sense of meaning underlying everyday behavior and objects. She also pays much attention to form and technique in writing. Anita Nair is exiting on many accounts. Her novels are always in a state of 'becoming', they never 'become'. It is the process which marks her creations. This is never a satisfying end. The journey is never complete. There is no solace, and complete union at the end of her novels. Reconciliation, compromise, helpless resignation may be there, but no gratifying or complete experience is offered to the reader. The net gain in reading this novelist is that the wanderer in us is provoked. Restlessness is celebrated. Alienation is highlighted. Anita Nair comes very close to present day woman's dilemma of existence.

To focus on Anita Nair's characterization, we see many similar characters in real life too. We do not find many who live alife advertised by existential philosophers. Priyanka Sinha sounds right when she mentions the commonness of Anita Nair's characters:" Hers are commonplace, everyday characters. They are alive, their tears real, their exasperation genuine and undramatic and their dilemma understandable. It could very well be a story of anyone of us. We could be. them, they us"[7]. Geeta Doctor also reiterates Priyanka Sinha observation;"Nair's characters are singularly life affirming"[8]. Even Anita Nair in an interview with Sheela Reddy express the same feeling, "I like to write about ordinary people and don't want to write about characters larger than life"[9].

Thus, by her sensibility, characterization, depiction and delineation, Nair ushers that the real purpose of a genuine feminist should not be equality between men and women but a healthy alteration of the present rigid definition of gender discrimination. The existing definition, which is based on opposition and difference that lie at

the heart of our whole system of values, has created and perpetuated an unnatural sense of reality, which is based on difference and separation rather than on identification and community. This leads to the perpetuation of hierarchy, competitiveness, aggression and domination rather than to empathy, co-operation and compassion. Hence, her two novels, *Ladies Coupe* and *Mistress* propel the idea that the ultimate end of the feminist quest should be for a new world view, a new way of knowing ourselves and our world, a new moral order of meanings.

True literature is a vehicle of presenting the highest ideals and aspirations of mankind, as also a potent means of recycling and sustaining cultural values from generation to generation. Feminine Sensibility leads us to believe that literary texts can provide a real understanding of the ways in which society victimizes and works to the disadvantage of women. Cultural practice is an essential ingredient of literature and it offers a special insight into human experience, thus enabling us to sharpen our perception of social reality. Obviously, literary texts of men, as well as, women assume a meaning for the feminist. Images of womanhood, positive or negative, as portrayed by male and female writers are subjected to critical examination by the feminist. *Ladies Coupe* and *Mistress* are concerned with patriarchal ideology in the sense that it interrogates and criticizes the ways in which women's subordination is naturalized and made to seen just the way things are. While trying to understand and assess the patriarchal structures of power, Anita Nair is committed to reject and change the literature, which perpetuates an unnatural sense of reality.

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3

Feminist Consciousness: A Study of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

*D.R. Komala**

The term feminist consciousness as defined by Garde Lerner, "The awareness of women that they belong to subordinate group; that they suffered wrongs as a group, that their condition of subordination is not natural but it is societally determined; that they must join with other women to remedy these wrongs. Victimization of women or gender oppression has extended from life to literature'.[1]

The God of Small Things is a classic Indian novel by Arundhati Roy. It tells the story of a fractured family from the southern state of India, Kerala. She says that "I grew up in every similar circumstances to the children in the book. My mother was divorced. I lived on the edge of the community in a very vulnerable fashion. Then when I was 16 I left and lived on my own, sort of.. you know it wasn't awful, it was just sort of precarious living in a squatter's colony in Delhi."

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The God of Small Things is a family saga narrating the story of four generations of a Syrian Christian family. The domination of male over female is portrayed through the characters like Baby Kochamma, Mammachi, Ammu and Rahel followed in the Indian society from generations to generations which is countered well in the novel. Mainly the novel concentrated on Ammu. She is the daughter of Mammachi and mother of Rahel and Estha. She became a victim of Male dominated society. After the retirement of Pappachi her father from government service in Delhi, they lived in their house Ayemenem in Kerala. She could not continue her studies because her father "Insisted that the college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl"(p-38). But her brother Chacko has been sent to Oxford for higher studies which clearly shows the discrimination present in the society. She has nothing to do other than to wait for marriage proposals and helping her mother in the housework. No proposals came because her father did not have enough money for dowry. She wanted to break free from the shackles of uncongenial atmosphere. "All day she dreamed of escaping from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long -suffering mother."(p-38). She had a troubled childhood before her marriage. When she went to Calcutta to spend the summer with her aunt she met an assistant manager of tea estate, a Hindu by religion at Assam to marry. She does not want to go back to Ayemenem, so she agreed with this marriage proposal "She just weighed the odds and accepted. She thought that anything, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem. She wrote to her parents informing them of her decision. They did'nt reply" (p-39). She has realized the blunder of her marriage because he was an alcoholic. She gave birth to twins. Her husband's boss a British manager of the tea estate wanted Ammu to be sent to his bungalow to 'look after' him, otherwise he will be thrown out of the job. When her husband urged to do this she refused with her silence which aggravated him. His "drunken violence

followed by post-drunken badgering.... When his bouts of violence began to include the children, and the war with Pakistan began, Ammu left her husband returned, unwelcomed, to her parents in Ayemenem"(p-42). But she found her parents who are indifferent towards her and her children. Her dreams were shattered and she did not receive any sympathy. Her father would not believe that "An Englishman, *any* Englishman, would cover covet another man's wife"(p-42)

Mammachi, Ammu's mother thought that "what her grandchildren suffered from was far worse that inbreeding"(p-61). The relatives-near and distant came to see her and chuckled at her discomfiture while they religiously expressed their sympathy. In contrast Chacko has been greeted warmly and made incharge of the house after his divorce form Margaret Kochamma. Ammu "Quickly learned to recoginse and dispise the ugly face of sympathy"(p-43). Mammachi also suffered in the male chauvinistic society. After the retirement of her husband from government service in Delhi they lived in Ayemenem house in Kerala. Eversince Mammachi started making pickles commercially but her husband never helped in this business because he considered this job is not suitable for ex-government official. He beats his wife every night. "The beatings were not new, what was new was only the frequency with which they took place. One night Pappachi broke the bow of Mammachi's Violin and threw it in the river"(p-47-48). One day when Chacko was in the house in vacation twisted the hands of his father to avoid the beatings. Since then Pappachi never spoke with Mammachi. But Chacko himself follows the male Chauvinism over his sister Ammu supported by his own mother. Ammu also did the work in the factory as much as Chacko, he always referred to factory with others as "My Factory" because "Legally, this was the case because Ammu as daughter, had no claim to the property"(p-57). This was the position of women in India till recently which supported legally the male domination in the

society. Ammu who is more moderate than his mother Mammachi revolts against the male domination by saying that "Thanks to our wonderful male Chauvinist society"(p-57). The author has criticized strongly the legality which hinders the empowerment of women through the character Ammu. Chacko speaks with gusto of manhood about the property and laughs at Ammu "What is yours is mine and what is mine is also mine"(p-57). He is a true male dominating character who does not want to share an inch of his property with his sister. He is extremely greed, jealous, selfish and not succeeded in business and family life. The writer attacks the prevailing hypocrisy of the society which built great barrier between man and women. Man by virtue of being a male fails to understand the gravity, deep sensitivity and dedication of a woman for the house. The biased attitude of the society fails to realize the importance of a man and woman in a society. They have to go hand in hand to build up a healthy society. One is not complete without the other. By portraying Ammu's character Arundhati Roy has registered her protest against the hypocritical behaviour meted out to women. Women is the one who can make man's life worth living but her discard and humiliation not only causes her downfall but puts a blackmark on the society as well. This is the reason that the male characters are not successful in their family life and business in the novel.

Baby Kochamma the sister of Pappachi who had fallen in love in her youth with an Irish father Mulligan failed to marry him. In despair she became a Roman Catholic to become close with Father Mulligan against the wishes of her father. Her father sent her to an university in America to do a course, which separated her from father Mulligan but her love for him never died and he never married her. This frustration of love in her life made her a saddist which made life of Ammu miserable. She lives stone turned to harass Ammu. Despite knowing how is the trauma of a dejected lady she says

that "A married daughter had no position in her parent's home. As for a divorced daughter from a love marriage, well... words could not describe Baby Kochamma's outrage. As for a divorced daughter from a intercommunity love marriage -Baby Kochamma chose to remain quiveringly silent on the subject."(p-45-46). She is an hypocrite who hates Ammu and her children. The ironical conditions in the novel bring a women against her own fraternity. She considered the twins as "Doomed, fatherless waifs. Worse still, they were Half - Hindu Hybrids whom no self- respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry. She was keen for them to realize that they (like herself) lived on sufferance in the Ayemenem House, their maternal grandmother's house, Where they really had no right to be. Baby Kochamma resented Ammu, because she saw her quarrelling with a fate that she. Baby Kochamma herself, felt she had graciously accepted. The fate of the wretched Man-less woman"(p-45). She poisons the minds of Ammu's mother and brother against her. She is also responsible for the children's unending suffering.

Mammachi was aware of her son's libertine relationship with the woman in the factory which never hurt her. When Baby Kochamma brought up this issue she replied that "He can't help having a Man's Needs"(p-168) This explanation is accepted by Baby Kochamma. Mammachi had built a separate entrance for the Chacko's room to fulfill 'his needs' she secretly given money to such woman as they accepted gladly to look after their children and parents because their husbands spent their earnings in toddy shops. "The arrangement suited Mammachi, because in her mind, a fee clarified things. Disjuncted sex from love. Needs from Feelings" (P-169). Ironically when the father of Velutha, Vellya Paapen, the untouchable and servant, narrated about the relationship between his son and Ammu, Mammachi became furious and shouted against him. "Her tolerance of "Men's Needs' as far as her son was concerned, became

the fuel for her unmanageable fury at her daughter. She had defiled generations of breeding (The Little Blessed One, blessed personally by the patriarch of Antioch, an Imperial Entomologist a Rhodes Scholar from Oxford) and brought the family to its knees. For generations to come, for ever now, people would point at them at weddings and funerals. At baptisms and birthday parties. They'd nudge and whisper. It was all finished now"(p-258). She has locked Ammu in the bedroom with the help of Baby Kochamma and Kochu Maria, an housemaid. This is the gender bias where Chacko's 'Men's Needs' are well accepted, but Ammu's relationship is termed as illicit, untraditional and contemptuous. She has been physically and mentally tormented for the sins she had committed which has taken her life away from the world. Ammu has revolted against the gender bias and the humiliation she received, which made her to smoke, had midnight swims and relationship with Velutha. "It was what she had battling inside her. An unmixable mix. The infinite tenderness of motherhood and the reckless rage of a suicide bomber. It was this that grew inside her, and eventually led her to love by night the man her children loved by day. To use by night the boat that her children used by day. The boat that Estha sat on, and Rahel found"(p-44).

Ammu knows that her children were not liked by any of her relatives but the children in their innocence loved everybody. She felt happy whenever she saw her children happy. She saw "Velutha lift her daughter effortlessly as though she was an inflatable child, made of air. As he tossed her up and she landed in his arms, Ammu saw on Rahel's face the high delight of the airborne young"(p-175). She loved Velutha because he was the only man loved her children. Estha and Rahel asked her mother why she had been locked up in the room. She screamed with frustration "Because of you ... I should have dumped you in an orphanage the day you were born! You are millstones round my neck!" (p-253). She

realized the burden of her children in her life in the shelterless paternal house. The house which suppose to give her security has become a prison of her life. As the novel suggests that all the problems have started with the arrival of Sophie Mol, the daughter of Chacko and his divorced wife Margaret Kochamma in the Ayemenem house to spend some time after sad demise of her second husband Joe. Estha and Rahel went to river with Sophie Mol to play in a little boat where Sophie Mol met waterygrave. Estha had been made responsible for this incident without considering that he is less aged than Sophie Mol. He has been slapped by Margaret Kochamma whenever she could.

After Sophie Mol's funeral Ammu went to Kottayam police station with her children to see Velutha who has been arrested on the charges of attempt to rape which is misrepresented by Baby Kochamma. She wanted to make the true statement which shows that she loved Velutha an untouchable by heart which she herself did not get in her house. The inspector said that "Kottayam Police did not take statements from *Veshyas* or their illegitimate children"(p-8) and misbehaved with her by tapping her breasts with his baton. The author exposed the stark reality of woman faced in public domain. The officer represents the attitude of the society towards a woman who has loved outside the rules of "Love Laws". When they left police station Ammu started crying "It was the first time they'd seen their mother cry, She wasn't sobbing. Her face was set like stone, but the tears welled up in her eyes and ran down her rigid cheeks. It made the twins sick with fear. Ammu's tears made everything that had so far seemed unreal, real."(P-8). She felt guilty by remembering the fate of Velutha inspite of her distressed and orphaned condition, she whispered that "I have killed him"(p-8). Rahel watched Ammu packing Estha's little trunk by whispering "May be a boy does need a Baba"(p-31) to send him to Calcutta to his father inspite of the Twin Expert's opinion that "Not advisable

to separate monozygotic twins"(p-31) which would certainly lead to natural distress, she had taken him to Cochin Harbour Terminus to give him a farewell, she assured him that "As soon as I can go away from here and get a job"(p-324), she will be back with him. When Estha expressed his doubt Ammu says that "I'll be a teacher, I'll start a school. And you and Rahel will be in it"(p-325). She was optimistic to lead the life with her children independently after getting a job but her family did not help more than that the society has not allowed her to lead the life independently without the support of a male. Chacko, Ammu's brother by the grief of Sophie Mol's death shouts on her "Get out of my house before I break everybone of your body" (p-225). In contrary Sophie Mol loved Joe, the second husband of her mother more than her real father Chacko. He orders Ammu with male gusto to "Pack your things and go"(p-226), who loves him and also her children. Having no legal hold to stay in the house. She has been forced to leave and die helpless, which reminds us Baby Kochamma's words "The fate of wretched Man-Less Woman" (p-45). Ammu had lost succession of jobs due to ill-health which made her to mis many days of work. On the last visit she came to see Rahel, with small present she said that after getting an another job she will rent a room for three of them to stay together and she will bring back Estha from Calcutta. When Ammu was suffering from cough and fever her mother Mammachi asks her "If she had been drinking"(p-161) and suggests to visit Rahel (Ammu's daughter) as rarely as possible. And Chacko said to Rahel that "Go and see her off"(p-161). This is a cruel and in human treatment faced in her parental house by a divorced woman. The stark reality of the society is exposed well in the novel. After being banished from her parental home. "Ammu died in a grimy room in the Bharat Lodge in Allepey, where she had gone for job interview as someone's secretary. She died alone. With a noisy ceiling fan for company and no Estha to lie at the back of her

and talk to her. She was thirty one. Not old, not young, but a viable, die-able age"(p-161). Her motherly feeling to take care of the children's education and problems remains unfulfilled. Her last effort to make a living in her struggle for survival for the sake of her children has vanished. She has been cremated without performing formal religious rites. Ammu had been humiliated by her father, betrayed by her husband insulted by the police made destitute by her brother, not cared by her mother has died at the age of thirty one. All these characters followed the idea of patriarchal society which has not given Ammu a right to live as daughter, wife, sister and a citizen in the society.

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What's in a Name? A Perspective on Namita Gokhale's Shakuntala: The Play of Memory

*Prof. D.T. Angadi**

Shakuntala: The Play of Memory Namita Gokhale's fifth novel, published in 2005 by Penguin Books India, is a challenging work of Indian English fiction.

Just as in the cinematic world there are remakes of old classic or super hit films, there may be literary works which are re-inventions of old myths embodied in literary works. What elements of the old classic film are taken over and fused with new ones in the re-make is a matter that doesn't yield to a formulaic description, so is it with literary re-makes or re-inventions.

A name is not just a name-it carries an extra linguistic overload, which may be termed "cultural baggage". Especially so it is in Indian where our names comes from mythology. Even an off-beat name like 'Vidyasagar' may acquire an overload of unintended Sarcasm, if the person so named doesn't make good in school and college.

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Early on, in Chapter 1 (By the way, the chapter - numbering in the novel is a little odd-chapter one is numbered zero, and the last chapter is a double zero. So in chapter one, Shakuntala the heroine of Namita Gokhale's novel, recounts, "I was named Shakuntala after the heroine of Kalidasa's classic drama.... That Shakuntala had been deserted by her mother, and her birth father Vishwamitra, and later by her husband Dushyanta - one could say that she carried within herself *the Samskaras of abandonment*. Some even consider it an unlucky name" (Pp. 6-7).

The first person narrator - heroine continues, "It was my mother who named me Shakuntala. I never asked her why. She was no nymph or apsara, nor a learned rasika, but a rugged hill-woman, with a passion for herbs and healing (By the way Shakuntala had lost her father at age 5). Shakuntala learns about that other Shakuntala of Kalidasa's classic drama, from her brother's tutor who comes to their house with brother Gureshwara, with an unhealing wound to be treated by Shakuntala's mother. He stayed with them for several days and it was he who introduced our heroine to the poetry of Kalidasa's Ritusamhara and the story of Shakuntala's abandonment by her parents and later by her husband Dushyanta.

The tutor had introduced the heroine to the beautiful hermitage on the banks of the river Malini where the Shakuntala of the epic was tended and cared for by the Shakunta birds, and so named Shakuntala.

On P. 24 of the novel we read, "That night as I tried to sleep, I conjured the other Shakuntala, reclining on a bed of lotus leaves, by the banks of the Malini River, writing a love-letter to the king. I too was ready for love, eager for the exquisite sting of Kamadeva's arrows. King Dushyanta would surely arrive to claim me... He would take me to distant lands beyond our unchanging hills".

Here then is the genesis of the Shakuntala complex implanted in our heroine's head. The bird is ready for its first flight out of the nest, and the mother's attitude

is not a help. She bestowed all her attention on son Gureshwara, and none of the daughter.

On the day of her first menstruation, Shakuntala is clapped in the coubled lest she go all by herself into the forest about nightfall.

She breaks out and, moved by a spirit of sheer rebellion, walks the reverse path, away from home that had rejected her. Nay, the waters of her feminist leanings run deeper, even unknown to her. She would abandon her husband (Srijan, who was a mahasamant) without willing it, without intending it, though Srijan had given her cause by bringing a dasi-a hand maiden-named Kamalini, for her service, while returning from his travels in the east.

She escapes once, to the dilapidated temple of the Matrikas in the valley to spend the night all by herself. Before that she had spent a whole night in the forest where she had met one whom she thought to be a rock-demoness but was a woman who had taken to the forest, being thought by the villagers a sorceress. She had tasted freedom once, she would taste it again and again. She hungered for experience and wanted to see the world.... "I want to travel as the men-folk do", as she told the village priest (P. 103) Half-a- day's journey – just the move from her mother's house to her husband's – had demonstrated to her that the impossible was possible now. "A man's equal in bed, why could I not desire what men enjoyed, the freedom to wander, to be else where, to seek, and perhaps find.... Something"? (P. 48).

To have a child, they had performed the Agnichayan ritual. Priests from Kashi had come to officiate at the ritual. The couple observed continence for the duration of the Yajna. But as soon as the ritual was over, Srijan was off on his travels into the eastern lands, and had brought back a woman to serve his wife as a hand maiden.

'I was not angry with Srijan', says she'. "He was a man, men were allowed many women, it was the way of the world I knew it" (58). But the hurt and betrayal rankled in her mind.

She records her feelings at the moment in these words: "I had known rage before, and anger, when, as a child, my mother had favoured my brother over me. But this was worse, a collapse of all that had been good and true in my life" (P. 58).

A believer in omens, she wanted to know what a serpent drinking milk from the teats of the beloved cow Dasyu in her dream meant. The village priest's stand is: you wander about the woods at night, far from your hearth and home and respected husband.... Srijan is a mighty man a wealthy man why is it you are not happy?" (103). It was at maid Amala's suggestion that she visits the abandoned shrine of Matrike and after her oblation at the Shivaligan sustained by a rock in the middle of the river.

As she returns to the shore after offering worship to the rock-shrine at Gangadhar, she hears a soft sprash behind her. She turns round and sees a man dressed in a short tunic his horse tethered to a tree. "He smiles at me. I am enchanted by his smile," says Shakuntala (P. 109). The man says nothing, does not greet her or ask who she is, but encircles her with his free arm - Kamalini and the palanquin - bearers, waiting for her on the top of the hill, already seem to belong to another life.

After their very first sexual encounter, the feels: "We are instinct itself.... I have never felt so alone, so absolutely only-myself... My life has changed, I feel that I cannot go back where I have come from" (110)

She lies to Srijan that she must go to the temple at Gangadwar once again to offer prayers, because the Yavana (Named Nearchus) had asked her to meet him at the same place the next day, too.

They travel along the banks of the Ganga. They stay at halting - houses along the route. Once, they even travel with a Cavanan, in face of rumours of an attack by bandits. On their travel they pass through Kanauj and Mahakashala, through forests and fields. Nearchus (speaking a dialect of Prakrit) told her of the sands of

Lybia, the river Egyptos, and Constantinople, the city of his birth. He talked of Kabul, Kandahar and the mountains of the Hindu Kush. She gave herself the name 'Yaduri' now.

They soon approach the holy city of Kashi, with its temples to Lord Shiva, its burning ghats, its garish lights. They arrive there late at night, at the foreigners' quarter, known as the lesser Kashi, on the left bank of the Ganga - by now, the absolute freedom she has enjoyed since leaving home, and the constant movement have intoxicated Shakuntala. She says, "I was ready to go on and on, until the end of the world if necessary". (136) Atone Place, they even watch an enactment of Kalidasa's Shakuntala.

But she had betrayed everything. I had ronounced my name, I was no longer Shakuntala, only Yaduri, the unmentionable one (because 'Yaduri' meant a fallen woman, a slut I had abandoned the husband whose true wife I was.... (150).

The question 'what's in a name?' actually springs from the lips of Narangi (the sweeperess), in the guest house where Shakuntala and Nearehus are staying in the Yavana quarter of Kashi) in Chapter 14. Shakuntala after giving out her name as Shakuntala, adds "But the Yavana, he knows me only as Yaduri". "Yaduri - what a name he chose!" exclaims Narangin reflectively. "That's all they want, these men, if they are saints or sinners, husbands or lovers. They want I get at the raisin that lies between our legs" (153). Returning the next morning Narangi asks, 'what's in a name?' and answers, "When I was a child, my mother had named me Rajrani. Now do I look in the least like a queen or princess to you? Maharani of the slop buckets! I changed my name to Narangi to please myself (153).

Memories of her happy wedded life to keep troubling Shakuntala. By the twice she and the Yavana have reached Kashi, she is torn by thoughts of shame and remorse, "My body has abandoned itself to shame here", she soliloquizes. "It hungers, lusts, contorts with pleasures that grow weaker and more desperate by the day.

Somewhere the cords that connect me to my body have snapped. This could be anyone's body; I watch it with horror and fascination. I am nobody; I am a body. A traveler picked me up as he might pluck a fruit from a tree, and now he is impatient to throw the core away" (161).

At a feast, the Yavana lifts Shakuntala up in his arms in full view of all the assembly and whispers in her ear, "you are my wife now, my delicious Yaduri". She is aghast, "I cannot be his wife", she tells herself. "I am the wife of another" (163).

Thinking of Srijan and home, her eyes fill with tears. "The world is a large place", she reflects. "it is too large for me. I want to go home". (166).

Shakuntala's question to the elephant keeper when she descends to the river to go to the real Kashi, is significant. "Is it only misfortune that could bring me to Kashi? Is it only Sorrow that makes one move on from where one began? Can it not be curiosity, or the joy of travel? (175).

"What madness overcame that day by the river?" she ask herself. She has rued the decision. There is a twinge of suspicions lurking at the back of her mind. Did her rival Kamalini cast a spell? An inner voice protests. 'Perhaps it was not her doing at all (though a crows feather under her bed and a dead cat bespoke some kind of witchery), for I was born under the star of exile, like my namesake Shakuntala" (166).

After the Yavana has gone on in pursuit of his business interests (horse-trading and spices and silks), Shakuntala is left all to herself. Standing on the other shore of the Ganga in the real Kashi, she muses: "Now I was alone, no one's wife or mistress, nor sister. In this frightening bazaar of people there was only one and my daughter, close and fitting, together and alone (181).

The next we see of her is in front of the temple, listening to the conches and gangs and bells.

Then, like a bolt from the blue, a bull charges at

her, digging its horns into her belly. She lies bleeding profusely and dying in the streets of Kashi. She had two babies in her womb (a boy and girl). The Monks pick up the male one the girl is still-born.

The month of Magh had arrived, the month in which she had been married.... It is tragedy time, now. "It was time for me to die" (193). For a moment she remembers Srijan. Resisting the over powering clutch of Death, she says to herself. "I knew I could not surrender yet. I had to return home, to Srijan. It was not him that I had run away from. I had set out in search of a part of myself, and it had eluded me. I had not traded one life for another" (194).

"With the sun at half-low, the afternoon stood still. A white light glared down at me. Kind hands held out water in a brass urn, but my mouth tasted of rust and blood and I could not drink. The river roiled and swelled with unease. A gust of anger rose inside me, compounded of contempt and clarity, and of exhalation. Namita has an uncanny way of juxtaposing words of conflicting import: How does she mean anger compounded of contempt, clarity and exhilatation? It did not matter I realized, that I had lived my life one way rather than another. The world would always have its way; at least I had searched for mine. That was the Taraka, Shiva's mantra of deliverance". (207).

Shakuntala's last moments tick away as she is being carried into the sanctuary of Buddha's Deer Park by a Buddhist nun.

In time, Kamalini became Srijan's wife. But she was not allowed to touch Shakuntala's clothes or jewellery which were kept in her wooden dower-box. Srijan opened it whenever he thought of her.

Shakuntala in her dying moments, thought of Srijan, the cow Dasyu with hercalf and her home in the trilling terrain where the Ganga descended from the mountain to the plains.

She could go back home only as a Shadow self a soul in flight. She had no body now.

She had died in Kashi, which was a blessing. She had not willed it, though. But she would reject the defeatism, the ignominy of her death in exile.

The narrator heroine's Karma plays itself out on three planes. Her return to the place of her birth and early Sanskaras can only be on the ethereal plane of thought. Chapter 19 ends with this beautiful piece of writing:

> "I traveled upriver past the grives and glades where Nearchus and I had made love to each other, past the rocks where we had sat and rested, the horse tethered beside us. Then, near Gangadwar, where the river leaves the mountains and descend to the world of mortals, my shadow self came upon the rock where I had offered oblations of milk for the safety of my unborn child. At this spot my resolution faltered. Was it here that I had failed in my duty? As my resolution faltered, so my strength diminished" (199).

An anticipatory hint of this sentimental journey of Shakuntala's back to the past is dropped as early as in chapter 7. "The thing about happiness is that one never recognizes it until long after the moment has passed. I loved Srijan more than anyone I have ever loved. He was like a father, mother, a brother, a sister, a lover, a friend; he was more to me than myself. I can feel this now, when it is far too late to do anything about it, but it is not as though I did not know it even then". (P. 80).

Contrary currents wash through the narrative.

At the end of the chapter numbered zero, the narrator-autobiographer philosophizes: like a dhoomaketu, the tail of a comet, the debris of one life pursues me through birth and rebirth" (4).

The continuation of the narrative beyond the autobiographer - narrator's death presents a technical challenge. A third person must take over where the first-person narrator can no more do the narrating. But Namta Gokhale conducts these super terrestrial events along the spiritual plane, using Hindu religious philosophy wherever need be. She proves herself to be an adept in the Shastras and beliefs of the Hindus. Besides, the whole drama is transported to a distant historical past when horse - traders and spice merchants traveled by road along the Ganga river-bank, and there was actually 'a silk route' which was always busy with travellers, traders and robbers. Various ethnic groups met and mingled with each other, and the lingua franca seems to have been some form of Prakrit.

There is indeed a mytho-historical built up to make the narrative acceptable to the reader.

As per Shakuntala's name, the linguistic overload and cultural baggage it carried, the novel's heroine by accident, not by design, over throws the debris of a previous birth (as if she as Kalidasa's Shakuntala once), and seeks her own freedom to do what she liked, to travel as men did of course she pays for it; but she has also gained from it what was worth a king's ransom. Does she feels any repentance? Yes and no. Is there any guilt feeling on her part? Yes and no. The tone of the narrative is ambivalent. She has at moments the satisfaction that she led her life one way rather than another. She had reversed the course of her destiny of abandonment? She was nobody's slave.

The element of prurience which marked the first novel of Namita Gokhale's viz. *Paro: Dreams of Passion* not surprisingly had an adverse press, alongside of excessive adulation in another section of the press.

But whatever was undeserved in the case of *Paro: Dreams of Passion*, Is well and truly deserved in the case of *Shakuntala*. It is a hauntingly beautiful novel. What

begins as a dull and drab story leaving apart the mystifying first chapter, takes on wings and transports the reader to a world of romance and wonderment. Mark how it begins: "I have run away to play in the forest, leaving my mother to her chores.... My flaxen skirt is soaked, streaked with mud, and when at last I make my way home, my mother strikes me thrice across the face...." (6) "My father had died when I was barely five, and his absence remained a stark presence in our unsheltered life...." (7).

"A fungal smell, compounded of stale gruel, smoke and disappointment, was settled like a pall about our house...." "Yet I stole my joys", admits Shakuntala. "All day I roamed the hills.... I would return home reluctantly only when the shadows lengthened... (7). "I hated everything about my mother, from my tangled hair to her shuffling gait and her cracked, dirty feet. I did not ever want to become like her" (8) while milking the cows, Shakuntala was always afraid that she would carry the same odour as her mother. "The comfort of her bosom smelt rank, and I would recoil from her absent minded embraces to play in the garden outside our home" (7).

Yet the one streak in her mental and moral make-up that points to the future is her love of the open, the hills, her love of adventure. "I.... was restless to see the world, to wander with the freedom of birds and clouds...." (8-9).

Prurience never again raised its ugly head in Namita's novels, after *Paro*. Sexuality dominating the lives of the characters, the explicit use of taboo words, the frank uninhibited description of scenes of love-making ceased after *Paro*.

Love must figure prominently in Namita's novels, as indeed it must figure in almost every novel and in the lives of all human beings. As the most beautiful thing on earth, it fills even ordinary lives with beauty, colour, romance and glamour. But its manifestations in fiction should not tend to be 50 physical and titillating as to

smear the beauty that belongs to love with slush or sloppiness.

Love, in *Shakuntala,* is kept at the evotic level. Its treatment is restrained, and only the beautiful part of it is brought out.

The first ever stirrings of love in a maiden's heart are described in these words:

> "That might, as I tried to sleep, I conjured the other Shakuntala, reclining on a bed of lotus leaves, by the vine-wreathed banks of the Malini River, writing a love-letter to the king. I too was ready for love, eager for the exquisite sting of Kamadeva's arrows. King Dushyanta would surely arrive to claim me.... He would take me to distant lands beyond our unchanging hills". (24).

The next reference to it comes after Shakuntala's marriage to Srijan is over and she waits, with trepidation, on the threshold of anticipation of the exquisite pleasure of the body:

> "When our time of waiting was over, Srijan Mastered me with courteous ease... Our bodies knew each other, and his touch brought me alive. After the rod of Vishvavasu, which had divided us, was removed, his hands traveled to every crevice of my body, warming me, flushing me, filling me with joy. I am no longer the same person as that young girl who yearned to soar like a Sankranti Kite in the windy mornings of the month of Magh. Yet I carry in my bones the feel of Srijan's hands, the heat of his breath on my body that first night" (40).

Mark, incidentally, the rhythm of the prose and its nuances of sound here: 'that young girl who yearned to ear like a Sankranti Kite in the windy mornings of the month of Magh' (40).

The following, perhaps, is the most spacious

description of love-making or sex in the novel, which is nevertheless kept within the bounds of decency.

"It was the night of the new moon. We embraced through the dark hours as we used to before, our love-making more urgent with the faintly narcotic smell of the flowers in my hair. I was floating in a very real rapture; it reminded me of the soma wine I had drunk during the Agnicayana ritualse, and of the flickering light in the hidden shrine of the temple where freshly plucked flowers adorned the yoni. There was an edge to our passion. The old trust had been replaced by a more demanding need. With Srijan I had few inhibitions, but that night I came close to losing all shame; I came close to being what I later became, with another (a Yaduri). When Srijan entered me it was different from how it had been, he took me in ways he had never done before. I would be lying if I were to and say that I did not enjoy it. The hurt and anger that had been raging inside had transformed me. At the height of our union, as Srijan spilled his seed into my womb, I was thinking not of him or of myself, but of a tall, large-boned woman with scornful eyes (the handmaiden Kamalini is who is meant) (67).

The following is the nearest the novelist comes to her former style of writing:

> "Obsessed by our night games, I set about seducing my husband, shuddering and moaning like a harlot, writhing and turning. My yoni was the one part of my body which was still alive, all pain, joy and hope concentrated in that one orifice. The rest of me was insulated and deadened by hurt, (she perhaps means the hurt Srijan had caused by bringing along a maidservant while returning from his travels in the east), but there I was hungry and supple. I wanted desperately to kindle my husband's body, steal his strength, own and possess power over him. But I could not succeed. Our love had vanished" (88).

Partnering Nearchus in a new relationship, Shakuntala describes how matters stood between them:

> "We do not go through the set motions of desire and arousal, there are no love bits or coy looks or sly smiles. We scramble into each other as rabbits into their burrows. We are instinct itself. He empties himself into me, pours the ritual oblation upon my yoni. I have never felt so alone, so absolutely only-myself, unmoored from everyone and everything familiar. My life has changed, I feel that I cannot go back where I have come from" (110).

Very often, it is the capsuled variety of description of sexual encounters that we meet with, as in the following.

"As his lips touch my earlobe, my stomach contracts over with desire. His mouth moves to mine, the kiss searching so deep that at last when I disentangle myself, something of me is left behind in him for ever" (111).

"Did he (Srijan) seek me as he probed and thrust, or my handmaiden, Kamalini"? (112).

Sometimes Shakuntala elaborates the experience:

> The Yavana's way of love-making was different from what I had known in the other life. It was rough and hungry and even unskilled, yet it aroused me in ways quite contrary to those, I had experienced before. I discovered that I enjoyed being hurt, and that pain validated my pleasure in matters of the flesh. The Yavana's uncaring demands for his satisfaction unleashed my darkest desires. Duty and decorum had fled me. We fornicated beyond the predictability of animals.... He look me by the orifice that lies behind. He held me roughly and slapped me on the face... I did not protest, for I had surrendered to this new fate.... (130).

Yaduri was sweat, salt and desire. Her pleasure spot was greedy and hungry for joy, it could not be satiated... .(131).

An exquisite piece of description of feminine beauty, done by a female, beauty, done by a female, in a few brush-strokes, may be cited as an illustration of Namita Gokhale's brilliant prose that matches the beauty of the conception of the love-story and its telling:

> "I examined her (Kamalini's) features in silence. Her eyebrows were curved like a strung bow. Her large, cold eyes, framed by thick upturned lashes, could be described as almond shaped or like the fish that lurked in the waters of the Ganga, depending on which poetic style one preferred. Her nose was long but slim, and two glittering nose-rings adorned the perfectly shaped curves of her nostrils. Her lips were large and sensuous, her neck a proud column. She was like a high-spirited stallion, or an unfolding lotus bud. I had always considered myself beautiful, until the day I met her. Now I felt like an overgrown child or a gawky village woman" (65).

As has been remarked before, Shakuntala is a beautiful romantic love story whose plot moves along unpredictable lines. That it should end in tragedy gives it a poetic touch. The heroine does not accept the defeat, the disgrace of abandoning one who had loved her and whom she too had loved, and life seemed to have brought her dreams of love to fruition. I was ready for love', she breathes to herself when she thought of that other Shakuntala whom she pictured in her mind as reclining by the banks of the Malini river and writing a letter to Dushyanta. She dreamed of her Dushyanta coming along on horse back to take her to distant lands beyond the unchanging hills (24)].

After Shakuntala's visit to the rock shrine down river at Gangadwar, we enter, as it were, a surreal world which

is neither dream nor reality. Shakuntala's experiences along the river-bank route are manifold, but all shot through and through with romance. Tragedy time comes all too soon. The unexpected overtakes the heroine. Left to herself of she would have retraced her steps to the hill-town where Ganga descended the hills to enter the plains. But it is a strange destiny for the heroine. It doesn't seem a contrived tragedy to bring the story to a close. Life teems with such unforeseen. If Shakuntala played her own love-game, destiny cracked a cruel joke on her.

As a hater of ritual, Shakuntala had resented the presence of the Kashi-priests yet, she had veered round to a half-believing and half-skeptical position. Though there is no evidence of her conversion to the beliefs propounded, there is no doubt about the religious ambience about the novel. The closing scenes are wrapped up in the cultural matrix of vedic Hinduism sue and Karmie philosophy. There is on page 184 a sermon by a Vyasa preaching at Kashi. This is about Maya Vyasa recounts the story of Narada's transformation into a Soubhagyasundari by Lord Vishnu when he wanted to know how Maya worked. She married king Taladhwaja, from whom she had 12 sons. Then, when the time for tragedy came, the enemy attacked Taladhwaja's Kingdom, and all the sons and grandsons were killed. The disconsolate Soubhagyasundari undertakes a pilgrimage to a shrine where she bathes in the punyatirtha. Now Soubhagyasundari is transformed back into Narada. He now realized what the traps of Samsara mean. The world is a mere dream, he understood, and the true goal of all life is Moksha.

Shakuntala had come to Kashi by accident. Death in Kashi may or may not win her salvation. But Shiva, the destroyer of memory, had not destroyed her memory to be sure. The debris of the lives she had lived before were there as a Karmic overload on her which she would have to work through....

Shakuntala is a piece of exquisitely chiseled prose, that has a sheen and a felicity of its own.

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5

Analysing patriarchy in Shashi Deshpande's Fiction

Kavya.B

"Between partriarchy and imperialism subject-constitution and object formation the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figtitation of the 'Third-World Woman' caught between tradition and modernization."[1]

Literature always bears its social relevance and it cannot be, and should not be enshrined in ivory towers. Contemporary issues get highlighted in literature' and writers endeavour to document all that they witness around them and conceptualise and crystallise them in their writings. Issues pertaining to gender have been discussed time and again by several authors and the share contributed by women writers in this direction is indeed remarkable. We find that the literary stage of the Indian English fiction has been agog with women writers. Increasingly more and more women are articulating anxieties and concerns centering on women's issues and have created a body of literature of their own. Feminine or feminist issues transcend all limits of geography and pervade wherever the issues of gender become pertinent.

Women writers reflect feelings of marginality and in return express their revolt against the purely masculine world.

It would not be out of focus to discuss the impact of modern thinking and living as evinced on the political and social front also as that would bridge between fact and fiction. Exercising a little break from the literary domain, one could recall the words of our Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh who said while inaugurating a women's leadership summit in Delhi sometime back, that the Government is committed to social, economic and political empowerment of women, whatever effort and resources the task might take. The Women's Reservation Bill providing for 33% reservation of seats for women in Lok Sabha and state assemblies is expected to come up shortly on the floor of the Houses. He, however, decried the low female literacy rate as well as the maternal mortality rate besides the exceptionally low sex-ratio. It is, interesting to note from the point of view of social relevance that "the gender disparity on the economic front is reflected in the low female work participation rate of 25.7% as compared to 51.0% for males," according to the Prime Minister. This goes very well the words we could see in our Constitution that the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitutin in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women.

It is an acknowledged fact that the novel, probably enjoying the status of being the most popular genre of literary exposition is "the readiest and most acceptable way of embodying experiences and ideas in the context of our time."[2] The originality or talent lies in the manner a writer uses this genre to bring home his ideas to the readers. Styles and techniques have undoubtedly kept changing with the times. In the past much attention was paid to the plot or story overlooking psychological aspects. But, of late, the modern novelists are employing new

techniques and indulging in experimentation, which is far removed from the traditional story telling. Shashi Despande's novels similarly add to the body of such literary corpus and she not only forthrightly articulates a thematic and technical maturity but also effectively communicates an intense feminine sensibility. She is ever vigilant to the issues associated with the contemporary Indian society, and has evolved a literary skill of her own that enables her to present them realistically and convincingly to the satisfaction and reason of her readers. She has apparently injected a new consciousness, offering varied interpretation of imperishable Indian values as well as highlighting our cultural heritage. Besides, she has added a new depth and a new dimension to Indian English.

It is well known that a woman's self-exploration leads her to realize that she has had no role in the making of the culture of which she is a product. Her self-identity is shattered by the patriarchal society that marginalizes her experiences and even her existence. It is here that she has to salvage herself image and find out herself for herself and also what she has lost. This urges that that she ought to redeem and reinstate her experiences as a woman of substance. It is only this process that can help her acquire personal autonomy. A realization of this need generates her penetration into the recesses of her being and she has to take her rebirth like the proverbial phoenix. It is for recording in fiction the woman's unrelenting struggle to acquire self identity in Indian middle class ethos that forms the substance of all the novels of Shashi Deshpande.

For many centuries women in India have been suppressed and oppressed by patriarchal society, thus Deshpande's optimistic note in the end of her novels implies a change in the attitude of her protagonists, to voice against their smothering. There is a ray of hope in the conclusion of her novels and it is determined by the self not by any external force. Shashi Deshpande has

been very subjective in her approach. As Pierre Bourdien outlines as: "a *verstehen* approach or a discourse in which the observer's often obfuscated apprehension of the other is integral to an impressionist, idealist, mentalist and subjective discourse. This then is a phenomenological approach which sets out to make explicit the truth of primary experience of the social world."[3]

As a feminist writer she is deeply concerned about individuality and the independence of the individual. The problems she portrays and her themes for the novels are apt not only for the present but for a long time to come. She is one of the most readable writers among the contemporary novelists. Though she has feministic themes in her novels she has risen above feministic views and has written about human beings. Deshpande mirrors the position of Indian woman in the traditional mould reflecting many stifling phases of the society. She stands apart from her contemporary writers for the only reason that her oppressed heroines attempt to break the shackles of being caught in the institution of marriage. She is a realistic novelist, whose novels are focused on the psychological complexities of female subjectivity, feministic struggle and women's communal existence. Thus her novels are set in authenticity, providing insights of gender, women and patriarchy. She is successful in canvassing the status of women in modem India. Her heroines come to terms with their self in their own way finding a novel solution for themselves. Jaya *(That Long Silence)* wants to break her long seventeen years' silence. Sarita *(The Dark Holds No Terror)* wants to speak about her nocturnal humiliation she was forced to undergo by her sadist husband Manohar. Indu *(Roots And Shadows)* doesn't want her husband to know about her extramarital sex and determines to do what she wants.

Urmi *(The Binding Vine)* wants to publish Mira's Poem. Madhu *(Small Remedies)* decides to go back to her husband so that they can find their son through their memory.

All her heroines undergo psychological journey to explore and identify themselves and there is always an optimistic interpretation of life. In defining their own identity the women protagonists remain stemmed in the patriarchal society. It is in the "prep triarchal form of the absolute" that these women discover the ground of being, their own inner spiritual and creative depth.[4] In her novels Deshpande's heroines attempt to come to terms with the past. "The past since it cannot really be destroyed... must be revisited; but with irony, not innocently."[5]

The narrative technique is usually a flashback technique, the protagonists learn from their past and gain strength with a new attitude to confront future. All the portraits of characters serve their artistic purpose and are portrayed in a humanistic way.

In all the novels selected for this investigative study, except Sarita all the protagonists are portrayed as female writers— Jaya, Urmi through Mira, Indu, Madhu come to terms with themselves through writing. Writing acts as a true elixir in their lives. As Helene Cixous opine's "Woman must write herself, must write about women and bring Women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies - for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text - as in the world and into history by her own movement."[6]

Shashi Deshpande's primary focus of attention is the world of women - the struggle of women in the context of modern Indian society. Unable to fully defy traditional, patriarchal norms of society, these women characters attempt to realize and preserve their identity not only as women but ultimately as human beings breathing fresh air. Being trapped in this woman's world of experience, Deshpande hopes to emerge as a kind of female Tolstoy who can create real, rounded characters and not merely women characters created for men. As Sarla Palkar observes, "for a long time woman has existed as a gap,

as an absence in literature. This is not only true of the fiction created by men but also by women, who have mostly confined themselves to writing love stories or dealing with the experiences of women in a superficial manner (which) represses the truth about the majority of their fellow beings and their lives."[7]

In fact, Shashi Deshpande hopes to fill this vacancy. Though her novels are set in a limited milieu of Indian society, the heightened sensibility of her protagonists helps them in their attempts to carve out a niche, however small, for themselves. It is this attempt which forms the basic concern of the novels taken up for study here. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* told mainly in the first-person narrative, presents before the discerning readers Sarita who attempts to free herself from the terrifying complexes of guilt which threaten to engulf her. *Roots and Shadows* is the story of Indu who, on the death of Akka, has to suddenly and unexpectedly, as a rare thing to occur, don the mantle of the family matriarch. *That Long Silence* brings us the story of Jaya's solitary crusade against the deafening silence that has entrapped the likes of her for generations. Sarita, Jaya and Indu experience homecoming which begins in them. a process of introspection. This leads them to a self-awareness not realized before. Coming back to their natal home does not provide them with a womb-like security but helps them to raise questions which they had never dared to ask themselves before. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors,* Sarita, a successful doctor, marries a lower-caste Manohar, much against her parent's wishes and walks out of her house. Using her mother's death as an excuse, she goes back home hoping to find solace away from her husband. Indu in *Roots and Shadows* is summoned to the bedside of a dying Akka -the rich, old family matriarch. A rebel from childhood, Indu's world now revolves around her husband Jayant: "When I look in the mirror, I think of Jayant. When I dress, I think of Jayant. When I undress, I think of him. Always what he wants, what he would like. What would please him...".

Yet, during the short stay in her ancestral home, away from Jayant, Indu is able to give a direction to her future life.

Sudhir Kakat views that - Super ego, the moral agency is weakly differentiated and insufficiently idealized in Indians. Whereas in the West, an individual's behavior is constantly regulated by the proscriptions of the Super ego, in a Hindu it is regulated by what he calls 'communal conscience'. He explains that communal conscience which comprises family and jati norms, "is a social rather than an individual formation: it is not 'inside' the psyche. In other words, instead of having one internal sentinel an Indian relies on many external 'watchmen' to patrol his activities and especially his relationships in all social hierarchies."[8]

Since ages Indian men have taken the responsibility of Indian women in terms of social security, economic security, protection of women from all criminals by sacrificing their own self, whereas the Indian women had only taken the role of the weak woman consuming their blood and sweat for the family only to die fast. But in the 21st century, no more Indian women are "weak woman" or "forced to wear only *sari*", they are as equal to men in every respect including their right to refuse to wear the Sari 'Jaya is reminded of lemmings, which rush down to the sea and drown themselves. For women marriage is a sea of sufferings where they drowned themselves in pain. At times, it is women who remain silent that suffer; it is their fault to choose that kind of life.

According to Deshpande there is no escape from being caught in the web of relations. She said to Vanamala Vishwanatha : "It's necessary for a woman to live within relationships. But if the rules are rigidly laid that as a wife or mother you do this and no further, then one becomes unhappy. This is what I have tried to convey in my writing. What I don't agree with is the idealizations of motherhood, the false and sentimental notes that accompany it." (*Literature Alive.* 13). Jaya is hopeful after

many years of bitter conflict and with glimpses of hope, Jaya has positive signs in her life. As a typical Indian woman she refuses to come out of the dogmas of married life. What is more important is that now she is ready to face the challenges of living with her demanding husband. She readily accepts her flaws and comes out of her depression. Deshpande's protagonists gain triumph not only as women but also as human beings.

After marriage Jaya is named 'Suhasini' -"A soft, smiling, motherly placid woman. A woman who lovingly nurtured her family. A woman who coped with every solution to safeguard her family and whose sole intention in her life is to be good and serve her family by all means." (16). "Men, by virtue of their penis, can aspire to position of power and control within the symbolic order. Women on the other hand, have no position in the symbolic order, except in relation to men, as mothers, and even the process of mothering is given patriarchal meanings, reduced, in Freud, to an effect of penis envy".[10]

Shashi Deshpande condemns the scheme of changing a woman's name as the part of a marriage. Her Characters rebel that tradition. Mira has immense urge to express her individuality:

> Nirmala, they call, I stand statue-still.
> Do you build the new without razing the old?
> A tablet of rice, a pencil of gold.
> Can they make me Nirmala? I am Mira. (101)

It's not changing her name after marriage but changing her identity enslaving her to the new house. Charlotte Perkins Gilman says: "It's no, that, women are really smaller-minded, weaker-minded, more timid and vacillating, but whosoever, man or woman, lives always in a small, dark Place, is always guarded, protected, directed and restrained, will become inevitably narrowed and weakened by it. The Woman is narrowed by the home."[11]

Both Saru and Indu ventured to marriage with a hope to get escape from their caged existence, in a quest of 'freedom' but in turn they get trapped in another cage. A pause from her routine life faraway from her husband, Indu is able to resolve the riddle of failure in her life. She is able to understand herself and learn many truths about her life. She says, "Have I become a fluid with no shape, no form of my own"? (54). Indu had dreamt of a happy married life, being independent, free from the clutches of her traditional Akka. But unfortunately her calculations go wrong after marriage with Jayant, she lost her individuality. She says, "This is my real sorrow. That I can never be complete in myself. Until I had met Jayant. I had not known it ...that there was, somewhere outside me a part of me without which I remained incomplete. Then I met Jayant. . . .and lost the ability to be alone" (31)

Only after living with Jayant she understands him. "I had, for some time loved Jayant. But between the idea and the reality there is an immense distance. To see, to feel a real man was so far removed from the idea of love as it was to me then (83). She then realized that she had fallen into a trap. "A trap? or a cage? ...a cage with two trapped animals gloryfying hatred at each other". (67) Jayant a typical Indian male who expects his wife to be passive and is shocked to find passion in a woman. It puts him off. When Indu expresses herself he turns away from her. Indu says," I've learnt my lesson now. And so I pretend. I am passive. And unresponsive. I'm still and dead"(78).

Indian women always have to adhere to Manu's ideals of happiness, her world revolves round her husband above all in the ideals of the traditional cultures, the 'good' woman is a *Pativrata,* subordinating her life to the husband's welfare and needs in a way demanded of no other woman in any other part of the world. The *Pativrata* conduct is not a mere matter of sexual fidelity, an issue of great importance in all partriarchal societies.[12]

Self-realization is the main theme of Shashi Deshpande's novels, which help her protagonists in discovering their identity. Rita Felski, elaborating on the narrative of female self-discovery, foregrounds that it is by itself an ideological site. "An active process of meaning production" and that since feminist ideology is "plural and heterogeneous", the narratives of female self-discovery are significantly different in their deliberations, reflections and emphases (126). Felski makes a broad division of self - discovery narratives into two distinct groups. In the first kind of narrative which is often linear in structure, female self-discovery and emancipation is depicted as- a process of moving outward into the public realm of social engagement and activity, however problematic and fraught with difficulties this proves to be... The second depicts self-discovery as a process of awakening to an already given mythic identity on inner self and frequently occurs in nature or in a generalized symbolic realm from which the contingent social world has been excluded.[13]

Saru's bitter realization of her marriage is that a woman must necessarily remain a step behind her husband. When asked by her friend Nalu to talk on 'Medicine as a profession for women' to some college students, Saru makes up her imaginary speech for a successful marriage, which depicts her silent painful experience: "A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. "...If he is an M.A., you should be a B.A., If he is 5'4", you should not be more than 5'3" in height. If he is earning five hundred rupees, you should never earn more than four hundred and ninety, if you want a happy marriage. Don't ever try to reverse the doctor - nurse, executive - secretary, principal - teacher role. It can be traumatic, disastrous. And I assure you, it is not worth it. He will suffer. You will suffer and so will the children. Women's magazines will tell you that a marriage must be on equal partnership. That's nonsense, rubbish. No partnership can ever be equal. It will always be unequal, but take care that it's unequal in favor of your

husband. If the scales tilt in your favor, god helps you, both of you (137)."

As Maria Miles opines: "The non-conforming conduct of the woman is not the consequence of an external necessity but of changed consciousness. They are not satisfied with the rhetoric of equality between man and woman but want to see that the right to an individual life and the right to development of their individual capabilities are realized in their own lives."[14]

The hellish life of a widow is seen by Sam who lived in the next street with a bare forehead and drab Sari. She was frightened to see her empty eyes which are the ghastliest signs of her widowhood. She- shudders at the woman's plight; "to put all of yourself into another and then be left alone" (135). Shashi Deshpande points out the superstitions followed by older generation: "... the members of the older generation still suffer from superstitions.. .some of them eat food from the unwashed plates which their husbands have used. If you utter the name of Rama, the soul of the dead will go to heaven quickly. The wife dying before her husband is to be considered good fortune. If a widow doesn't shave her head, she is a second class citizen." As a child Sam has seen her grandmother who was deserted by her husband a few years after marriage. She was a young woman then with two little daughters, one of whom was Sam's mother. Her grandmother's father had taken the deserted woman and her daughters to his house and got the girls married. The grandmother had never complained and accepted it as her fate: "It was written on my forehead." The submission of women to the male dominated society is clearly shown through these characters. As Kate Millet rightly points out: Patriarchy always "subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male".[15]

Since her childhood, it has been drilled in her mind by the women members of the family that she as a female has to, Indu resents -"As a child, they had told me I

must be obedient and unquestioning. As a Girl, they had told me I must be meek and submissive. Why? I had asked. Because you are a female. You must accept everything, even defeat, with grace, because you are a girl, they had said. It is the only way, they said, for a female to live and survive "(158).

Akka was one of the victims of child marriage who underwent inhuman treatment under the shackles of marriage. Indu's view towards Akka changes after hearing Akka's story from Narmada Atya: She was just 12 when she was married and he was well past 30. He was tall, bulky man with large, coarse features. And she she... was small, dainty, really pretty with her round face, fair skin, straight nose and curly hair. Six months after her marriage; she 'grew up' and went to her husband's home. She was not able to share her plight with anyone as she had lost her mother when she was a child and her father remained aloof. Twice she tried to run away as a girl of 13. Her mother-in law, whipped her for that and locked her up for three days, starved her as well. And then, sent her back to her husband's room. The child, then said, cried and clinged to her mother-in-law saying, "Lock me up again, lock me up". But there was no escape from the husband then." (77). Her husband sexually harassed Akka as a child but she was able to take revenge on him when he was bed ridden for two years as a result of a stroke. Though Akka looked after him well as a dutiful wife she didn't allow his mistress to meet him. Akka's domineering character and the plight of child marriage could be witnessed here. In this case Shashi Deshpande not only throws light on the sufferings of victims of child marriage but also the liberty of a man who can have another woman if he is not satisfied with his wife. This reveals as Neena Arora remarks: "Man considers it as normal behavior to satisfy his desires at both the emotional and the physical levels outside marriage, while it is ruthlessly condemned as adultery in case a woman indulges in it even though accidentally the slightest hint

of any deviation on her part which may not even involve sex, man turns violent and hostile towards his wife and starts prosecuting her. This condemnation is dictated by man's interest in preserving his property rather than by any moral consideration."[16]

Small Remedies is a path breaking novel by Shashi Deshpande, which belongs to the second phase of her writings. Vikram Seth's third novel *An Equal Music* (1999), Salman Rushdie's *Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) and Shashi Deshpande's *Small Remedies* (2000) are woven around music. This novel holds a mirror to the social transitions occurring in Indian society. Savitribai and Leela represent modern women with vaulting ambitions and courage. These women are devoid of feminine weaknesses and they aspire to masculine power and respect. Music and politics are the two fields through which Savitribai and Leela desire to establish themselves. They are aware of their oppression in society, as women and they want to claim equality in career. Their dreams bring them out of the threshold thus violating the family bondages. In remembering and retelling the stories of Savitribai, Leela and Munni, Madhu is recovering from bereavement. Madhu's husband Som is stubborn to make Madhu accept her Qnly act of sex before marriage when she was a child as adultery. Madhu's refusal to accept it as an act of infidelity changes his attitude towards her; if she had blamed it as a rape he would be at rest but her invoiment makes him rude. Before marriage he had a full-fledged girl friend with whom he had enjoyed sex life but he can't accept a single act of sex from his wife. He either wants her to blame it as rape or surrender adultery. Her refusal to innocence or infidelity is hurting to his male ego and reveals the Indian mentality of man who want his wife to be a virgin before marriage and *pativrata* after marriage, whatever man does is not questioned but if a woman does anything she has to bear the consequences alone even after many years. Madhu is not left out of it after many years of marriage when her son is 17, Som

is upset with the revelation of Madhu' s only act of sex with her father's friend when she was a child. That man is no more, committed suicide soon after that may be due to the guilt he suffered. According to Janalowski, virginity in woman is "the legitimacy of heirs to a male bloodline essential for the reproduction of patriarchal society."[17]

Leela or Bai' s desire to find their position other than wife is not looked upon by society as normal. As Jessica Benjamin observes: "[I]dealizing woman's desexualization and lack for agency... preserves the old gender system, so that freedom and desire remain unchallenged male domain, leaving women to be righteous, intimate and caring.[18] It is through the way of self- realization that Bai and Leela attain their freedom. And "[a] Person who achieves freedom becomes responsible for herself and for the society" for freedom "always comes with responsibility": *(A Quest for Freedom VII)*. Leela always supported herself. When her first husband Vasant died she took up a job and educated her brothers-in-law. Leela is a strong-minded woman who didn't care for the convictions of the society. She was an active member of the Communist Party and opposed the Gandhian methods of Ahimsa Satygraha. She was an unusual woman ahead not only of her generation but the next as well. She believed in equality not in the discrimination of people by their races. (M)en alone do not make society. Men and women do. If society belongs to all human beings, but some human beings cling to it with their fingertips, then they must tell society that they too have hands. Women too want to hold society in the depth of thin palms, to feel it, to nurse it, to savor it, and to know that it is wonderful to be alive!"[19] After becoming a widow she helped her brothers-in-law in their education and married Joe who was a widower with *two* children. Even after marrying Joe, a doctor with a fairly good income, she continued to live on her own money. Leela and Joe made a wonderful companionship apart from their differences. (99).

Even Bai' s way to success was not a road of roses. She was first influenced by her mother towards singing and she was the one who sent her for learning music but her father was very furious. "Do you want your daughter to be one of those women?", he asked his wife. That was the end of the music. Even the Bai was a very pampered child. As her father was the eldest of the three brothers, she was the first grandchild in the family. She was brought up in a very wealthy orthodox Brahmins family. Aruna's words echo in the mind of Leela and Bai: "Just because I can't change the whole society, should I give up doing whatever I can? I have realized that I can't live without doing my bit.. .My work will give me satisfaction - the satisfaction that my life has meaning. Isn't that what freedom is all about? If at all I cared about was my own life, then I wouldn't need this freedom my freedom should have meaning. Right now, finding that meaning is my goal.[20]

Through her characters, Shashi Deshpande suggests that the modern Indian women should learn to conquer their fears and assert themselves in order to keep abreast of oncoming situations along the path they wish to tread upon. Her novels generally end on a note of compromise which is quite representative of the basic Indian attitude. The heroines of Shashi Deshpande whether Indu, Sam or Jaya are all intelligent and understanding women. Unlike the mythical figures as that of Sita and Savitri, they recognize the new roles which they want to perform in the new world. She deconstructs the myths like Sita as a perfect woman, or as a self-sacrificing woman since she believed that all these myths have been created by men. She created a new woman who is capable of self-analysis. While acting as a wife, mother, daughter etc. she tries to discover for herself new ways of living and also new ways of functioning. Since Deshpande claimed to write from real life and not from myths etc., hence she did not create the "self-sacrificing mothers and totally chaste wives." She portrayed them as human being as

they are in their real life. With the conviction of rationale and accountability, Shashi Deshpande holds steadfast to her convictions in a tradition-bound household, which is proof enough of her individuality. The portraits she presents all through her novels are integrated and cohesive even under the pressures of modernity and under Deshpande's aegis, modern Indian woman expresses her courage in her choice to stay and face fresh challenges of life boldly and with self-confidence, assertion and determination in order to march towards progress to achieve self-fulfilment and peaceful living, rediscovering and redefining her relations with the world at large.

One can conclude that Shashi Deshpande's women are denied control over their body, sexual reproduction, physical security and an invariably bullied and vexed during periods of menstruation. They are made to feel 'soiled' and 'unclean'. In her portraits of such crucial-issues Shashi Deshpande's is bold and uncompromising but records her protest with subtlety and grace. Except Urmi and Saru all her characters have no control whatever over their own labour and their income. Sahshi Deshpande's protagonists are rooted in their families and have no control even over their mobility and are kept out of access and control over their basic political spaces. Always her protagonists who are women are denied control over even tangible products, information, influence or political clout. Shashi Deshpande makes it very clear that in reality a woman's actual experiences are inter-connected, inextricable and cannot be compartmentalized. Her characters struggle to record protest eventually in their lives. In their journey from a kind of slavery Shashi Deshpande takes them towards self-awareness at various levels and finally to an assertion for autonomy and freedom. That is how the scared Indian women caged in these closets of agony and tradition gradually arrive at autonomy and empowerment. As in the case of Western Europe or the U.S.A the Indian characters of Shashi Deshpande cannot easily solve their problems through

easy legal remedies like divorce. Shashi Deshpande's whole effort is to arrive at integral perspective where she would like to see the Indian Women expanding boundaries acquiring power without uprooting or shattering the existing structure. Shashi Deshpande, it can be seen is not a revolutionary feminist or a supporter of the use of force through the divorce doctrine which, however is showing phenomenal increase in number in the twenty first century India caught in the web of liberalization ,and globalization.

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6

Interrogating Motherhood in Toni Morrison's Beloved

Lavanya C.

> "The emotional, sexual and psychological stereotyping of females begins, when the doctor says, "It's a girl"." (http://thinkexist.com/mother's_day_quotes)

Shirley Chisholm's words undoubtedly depict the stereotyping of women right from the moment of their birth. For as long as one can remember, women were marginalized by compelling them to lead the life of dependence and they were made to sacrifice their 'life' and 'self' for the sake of others. Woman plays an important role in the society and she is the central figure when one considers the family. Absence of women in family structure clearly shows the incompleteness of any family for that matter. In spite of this predominant place, fighting for equal rights and struggling for the recognition of her 'self' in the welfare state is present even today.

All the way through history, women were marginalized by preventing them from any meaningful participation in society. Marginalization of women is at

three stages, as a daughter, as a wife and as a mother. This type of marginalization shows gender disparity, the removal of which is very complex.

Women were marginalized in all the three roles. Mother, who occupies the central place in the family, is made to lead the life of sacrifice and dependence. Their main obligation is fostering children and showing a better way for them in their life. Their role is stereotyped because the society imposes the above said duties on mothers and not on fathers. Father, who serves as a supporter of the family escapes from the responsibility of protecting and taking care of children and family. Though mother is the central figure of the family, she remains marginalized because of the fact that she is a 'woman'.

Generally, women are marginalized in every corner of the world in any patriarchal society. But when one takes the circumstances of black women, they were not only marginalized but also dehumanized. If black men experienced racism, black women were subjected to both racism and sexism by utilizing them as sexual objects during slavery by whites. Black women lived silently with their white oppressors because they lacked enough courage to protest and found themselves unable to raise their voice against whites exploitation. Regarding this, Evelyn Cunningham writes:

> Women are the only oppressed group in white society that lives in intimate association with their oppressors. (http://www.quotegarden. Com/mom-day.html)

The above lines of Cunningham are apt to black women who were aware of their situation during slavery but remained silent.

Toni Morrison was an emerging literary figure during Black Feminist Movement. Thinking about the importance of black women's subjectivity, she showed high concern regarding the identity of black women. Black women, especially mothers played a vital role in the family

structure and it is mother, who had the responsibility of taking care of her family, due to the absence of father figure in the African-American community.

In Feminist criticism, Toni Morrison holds second place that is 'woman as writer', the first being 'women as reader'. Consequently, she creates stories, themes, history, genre and the structure of literature, which concentrates wholly on black women. Morrison's novels portray the supremacy of white ideological culture. During slavery, whites structured some rules and norms and thereby compelled blacks to follow them, the failure of which resulted in severe punishment for blacks.

Morrison directed her protest against these established norms in some of her novels with the intention of cherishing black culture. In *Beloved,* Morrison, through Sethe presents the protest of mother against the norms of African-American community.

Due to the absence of father figure, a mother was forced the responsibility of family on her shoulders. If a comparison is made between a black mother and an Indian mother, both of them are in same position without any identity and freedom. But in the Indian context a mother is worshipped though she is made to live within four walls, with the complete ignorance of the value of 'identity'. If a mother in India has suffered a lot at the hands of her husband or her family members, the mothers in African-American community are the victims of racism and sexism.

Black mothers were more exploited than mothers in India by utilizing them as mammies by whites. Whites expected mammy to be caring, loving and nurturing towards white children and this led to the negligence of their own children. The significance of mammy image lies in the fact that, it aims to shape the manners of black women as mothers. Rhetaugh Dumas opines that:

> Black women executives are hampered by being treated as Mammies and penalized if they do not appear warm and nurturing. (71)

Morrison views motherhood as an important source of empowerment and freedom. Valdes says that, for African-American women, motherhood is:

> An empowering experience that is fundamental to the survival of the black, and more specifically, African-American community. (259)

Toni Morrison, being herself a mother of two children, has explored different and unique images of mother in her novels. One finds various images of mother when her novels are taken into consideration. Among different mother images, the image of mother who neglects her own children by giving more importance to white children is found in her first novel *The Bluest Eye*. In this novel, the mother image, Pauline, neglects her own daughter Pecola and shows her love and warmth towards her white owner's children. Ultimately, this negligence leads Pecola to end her search in madness. By rejecting her own culture, Pauline embraces white culture, because of which she becomes responsible for her own daughter Pecola's tragedy.

In her second novel *Sula*, Morrison explores contrasting images of mother. Nel's mother cares about her daughter while *sula's* mother shows no concern in care taking. But Eva, another maternal figure in *Sula* is unique. She alone struggles very hard to support her family without the moral and economic support of her husband. She fights all alone to give better future for her children.

In this novel, Morrison shows Eva as a very strong and capable mother who never cares about her life, but was concerned about her children's future life. She is a typical black mother whose primary responsibility is to carve a bright future for her children. Though she loved her children very much, she was not ready to accept her son's failure in life. Being frustrated by her son's breakdown in shaping his future successfully, Eva kills him because she cannot tolerate seeing her son who is

suffering without achieving anything in his life. However, the interesting thing is that, this same Eva tries hard to save her daughter when she was dying. This different behaviour of mother does illustrate the complexity hidden in black mother figures explored by Morrison.

When a woman decides not to marry or to become a mother that means she breaks herself from her ancestry and fails to pass on her heritage for upcoming generation. *Sula* is the best example, who refuses to become mother by choosing her self-fulfillment as more important for her than her motherhood. However, her grandmother Eva tries her best to make *Sula* understand the significance of becoming a mother, *Sula* replies: "I don't want to make somebody else. I want to make myself." (92)

Prior to Black Feminist Movement, women had no authority to decide what they wanted in life. However after the success of Feminist Movement, women, especially mothers became literate and vocal and started to design their life as per their wishes and comforts. Women were also given right to decide whether they wish to become mothers or not. From 1960s onwards, the role of mother was not mandatory but left to the choices of women.

Apart from the images of mother given by Morrison in *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula,* she explores a different image of mother in her Pulitzer Prize winning novel *Beloved. Beloved* is based on a true story of Margaret Garner who committed the brutal act of infanticide with the sole intention of protecting her daughter from the evils of the institution of slavery. It is the story of Margaret Garner, which becomes the central theme of Morrison's *Beloved.* Before writing *Beloved,* Morrison had undertaken many researches and had told Marsha Darling that:

> I did research about a lot of things in this book in order to narrow it, to make it narrow and deep, but I did not do much research on Margaret Garner other than obvious stuff, because I wanted to invent her life, which is a way of saying I wanted to

> be accessible to anything the characters had to say about it. Recording her life as lived would not interest me, and would not make me available to anything that might be pertinent. (248)

Morrison herself was not aware of what happened to Margaret Garner ultimately because of different hearsay about her in various newspapers. These limited information regarding Margaret Garner led to the invention of her character through Sethe by Morrison in *Beloved.*

In *Beloved,* Morrison has just depicted the act committed by Margaret Garner without mirroring her life style, because Morrison's intention is to invent her life through Sethe, the protagonist of the novel. Thereby Morrison carves an innovative and inimitable image of mother who struggles very hard to achieve an identity of her own and even succeeds in gaining it. The novel evidently explores the black female experience that tries to obtain freedom for black women. *Beloved* is structured in the slave narrative genre, which is exclusively the story of Sethe, as a black female slave, as she assumes different role as mother, as a black mother in particular.

Beloved was first published in the year 1987, which is centred on the theme of slavery and motherhood. The novel revolves around the theme of identity in which, one finds the journey of symbolic maternal figure Sethe, towards fostering an identity of her own in the African-American community. *Beloved* is set in 19th century, concerning primarily with the life and experience of the central character, Sethe. Through Sethe, Morrison tries to show the plight and struggle of a black mother in restoring her identity in black community.

Black mothers, during slavery, led an inhuman and merciless life, which is explored by Morrison in *Beloved.* The institution of marriage among blacks was not given any importance by whites and black women were used only as breeders. Whites subordinated the blacks

completely by dinying their culture, language, tradition and religion. Blacks were not treated as human beings by whites but utilized them as commodities especially black mothers by encouraging them to bear more children, which is used by whites as domestic assets.

Slavery was terrible to blacks but it was more terrible and dreadful for black women especially mothers because whites just treated them as machines producing children endlessly. The physical and psychological effect of slavery on blacks was such that, though the civil war ended slavery they were not able to lead happy and peaceful life with their children.

In *Beloved*, through Sethe, Morrison demonstrates the plight of black mothers during the time of slavery. Sethe, the maternal figure of the novel, escapes from slavery along with her children to lead a happy and peaceful life with the community. But unfortunately this peaceful life of Sethe is thwarted by white masters who arrive to Sethe's home to take her back to slavery. By seeing the white masters again, she loses her mental control, drags all her children inside the yard.

Baby Suggs and Stamp Paid become infuriated not because of Sethe's manner of dragging children, but by seeing the horrifying scene inside the yard, where they witness Sethe holding 'blood-soaked' child to her chest.

> Inside, two boys bled in the sawdust and dirt at the feet of nigger woman holding a blood-soaked child to her chest with one hand and an infant by the heels in the other (175).

Sethe remains unaware of whites when they enter inside the yard and she simply swings the baby towards the wall mercilessly. Sethe's act reiterates the impact of slavery on her psyche. It is not madness, which forces Sethe to kill her daughter, but the terrible and barbaric picture of slavery, that made her commit such a cruel act. She considers death as a best alternative for her children, instead of suffering at the hands of whites and

succeeds in killing only her daughter, though her intention is to take the life of all her children.

When she was trying to kill one more child Baby Suggs enters and stops Sethe from doing such a cruel act. In reality, mothers always try to protect their children from evil things by taking care of them properly. In this case, Sethe fails to become a stereotypical mother by committing the cruel act of infanticide.

When the whites actually witness Sethe's act, they say, "something was wrong with her (176)". Whites, who have come to take Sethe, back to slavery remains motionless by seeing her and they realize that they cannot claim blacks anymore. By looking at Sethe's face after the incident, nephew says, "you just can't mishandle creatures and expect success (176)". Nephew's words shows that the blacks have gained subjectivity after their escape from Sweethome, and whites could not claim their power over black slaves again.

When one learns the circumstances of Sethe's act, the reader feels and thereby realizes that 'killng' was the only way left to her in order to save her child from the future possibility of exploitation and dehumanization. Therefore, she reacts immediately on seeing whites in her yard:

> Little hummingbirds stuck their needle beaks right through her headcloth into her hair and beat their wings. And if she thought anything, it was No. No. Nonono. Simple. She just flew. Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where no one could hurt them. Over there. Outside this place, where they would be safe. (192)

Sethe, thinking of no other way takes the 'decision' of killing her own child: "I took and put my babies where they'd be safe (193)". This 'safety' was missing in blacks

lives, especially for mothers and children in Sweethome plantation.

Morrison presents Sethe's act of infanticide in front of readers to decide whether her act is right or wrong. If one understands the nature of the institution of slavery and its physical and psychological impact on black women, they do not view Sethe's act as evil due to the barbaric nature of slavery. In her first novel *The Bluest Eye,* Morrison shows her interest in talking about black girlhood that is the life of Pecola, while in *Beloved;* she is concerned about a black mother, Sethe's journey into 'selfhood'. Morrison's intention is to transform black mothers from their forced silence to the actual recovery of their own submerged voice.

The novel throws ample light on slave's predicament and their quest for freedom. Ever since the slaves were brought from Africa to America, they were more treated like animals than human beings were. Whites even compelled blacks to work like animals with complete ignorance of freedom and identity. Blacks were even oblivious of what freedom and identity meant and, continued their life under inhuman white masters. Unfortunately the blacks were made to accept the life of slaves given by whites and could only make some futile protests against the injustice done to them. Sethe, the maternal figure of *Beloved* also leads an inhuman life at Sweethome without any understanding of the identity of her own.

Sethe was brought to Sweethome as a substitute for Baby Suggs. At Sweethome Sethe falls in love with Halle, son of Baby Suggs who hired himself for five years in order to purchase freedom for his old mother. Sethe, like other black slaves experiences physical violence during her stay at Sweethome plantation. She was brutally attacked by two young white boys, who stole her milk by holding her down forcibly:"After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk" (19). The horrible event of schoolteacher and his boy's act of forcibly taking Sethe's

milk is considered as an important cause for her to commit infanticide.

Gradually Sethe gains knowledge about her subhuman level during her stay at Sweethome and becomes conscious of her slave life. By hearing the discussion about her from schoolteacher with the boys, she finally becomes aware of the difficulty of living, if she continued to stay in Sweethome under schoolteacher's cruel rules. Sethe was asked to prepare the ink by schoolteacher, utilized for writing about slaves in his notebook. Sethe overhears the discussion between schoolteacher and the boys about her as:

> No, No. that's not the way. I told you to put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up. (228)

This was not tolerable to Sethe as she was reduced to an animal. It is after this incident that she decides to leave Sweethome in order to live freely with her children. But when that freedom is taken by whites arrival she kills her daughter, thereby violating the norms that mother has in the black community.

African-American community has some norms regarding the role of the mother. As per the norms, the primary duty of mother is to look after children by preventing them from evil things. But Sethe fails in following the norms of community and breaks herself by killing her daughter. Sethe's act is considered as vicious and a violation of norms by the black community. By committing infanticide, she breaks herself from the stereotypical motherhood and claims her act as her right to do.

Though the community rejects Sethe, she as a black mother justifies her act by saying that she has every right to do anything to the parts of her own body. According to Sethe, only she had right to take her children's life because of the fact that, it is she who has given life to them.

Commenting on Sethe's viewpoint on her act, Morrison in an interview with Rothstein says:"It was absolutely the right to do... but it is also the thing you have no right to do" (17). Giving life is human beings rights but not taking their lives in whatever the circumstances may be. But Sethe's case is an exceptional one, where she clearly justifies her act by claiming it as her right.

Sethe becomes a scapegoat in black community due to her act of infanticide. One interesting thing to note in *Beloved* is that, the community focuses its anger and hatred on Sethe for her act by isolating her and by banishing her from community. However, the whites had committed many cruel, barbaric and inhuman things during slavery to blacks by subjugating them, which remains unquestioned.

After committing infanticide, Sethe buries her daughter thinking that her job is over, and continues to lead her life with her living daughter Denver without the support of the community. But *Beloved* comes back to her from her grave who is claimed by Sethe as her daughter. During slavery, mothers had no right to claim their own children because; no child belonged to its mother due to fragmented family. However, after escaping from slavery Sethe becomes a thinking subject and claims the new girl as her dead daughter *Beloved*. Believing that, *Beloved*, is her dead daughter manifest into flesh and blood, Sethe endeavors to assert her, as her dead daughter returned to her mother, that is Sethe.

Initially, Sethe considers *Beloved* as an orphan, but later by recognising at the scar around her neck, Sethe believes her as her dead daughter who has come back to retrieve her lost maternal love from her. Till *Beloved*'s arrival Sethe atones for her daughter by living with her spirit, but when she sees an unknown girl in front of her home she wastes no time in accepting her as her dead daughter. Out of excessive love, she says:

> BELOVED, she my daughter. She mine. See. She come back to me of her own free will.... She had to be safe and I put her where she could be. But my love was tough and she back now. I knew she would be. (236)

Sethe opines that her love for her children is very 'tough and thick' which she thinks as the reason behind her daughter to return to her.

Gradually *Beloved* tries to hold monopoly over Sethe and becomes more possessive of her. *Beloved*'s need and thirst for mothers love goes beyond customary levels. Sethe also forgets herself by giving more attention to *Beloved* and thereby creates their world by excluding Denver.

> Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved's eyes. Like a familiar, she hovered, never leaving the room, sethe was in unless required and told to. (68)

Beloved 's demand for Sethe's punishment for killing her daughter, parallels Sethe's own need for atonement, which consumes both, oblivious of the outside world. The fear that *Beloved* would leave her once again makes Sethe stop going to work. Sethe's mother love for her imagined daughter *Beloved* goes beyond extreme level, unconscious of its threat on her life. Gradually, Sethe allows *Beloved* to possess her:

> The bigger Beloved got, the smaller Sethe became: the Brighter Beloved's eyes, the more those eyes that used never to look away became slits of sleepiness. Sethe no longer combed her hair or splashed her face with water. She sat in the chair licking her lips like a chastised child while Beloved ate up her life, took it, swelled up with it, grew taller on it. And the older woman yielded it up without a murmur. (294-95)

By excluding Denver Sethe gives herself to *Beloved*, who becomes her 'best self'.

Sethe's love for *Beloved* makes her to forget her own 'self' and she becomes morally and physically weak. Later in the novel, *Beloved* says, "I AM BELOVED and she is mine" (253). By telling like this, *Beloved* tries to possess Sethe completely. *Beloved*'s words, "she is mine" shows that, Sethe has lost her 'identity' and has no 'self' because of devoting everything for the sake of *Beloved*'s happiness.

Beloved's control on Sethe makes her difficult to realize what was happening to her over life. Only at the end of the novel, with the assistance of black community, is Sethe saved from *Beloved.*

After Sethe's separation from *Beloved*, she retreats herself to Baby Suggs room ostensibly waiting for death. But Paul D comes to rescue her life and tries to bring her to the present life from past. The moment she sees Paul D Sethe cries out saying: "she left me... she was my best thing" (321). For Sethe, like other mothers, her children were her best thing and when *Beloved* enters Sethe's life, she replaces Denver by becoming Sethe's best thing. Sethe attacks Bodwin, a white abolitionist at the end of the novel who comes to take Denver for work, misthinking him for the schoolteacher coming back to take them to slavery. The reason behind her attack is that, she never wanted to lose her best thing *Beloved* again. Regarding this, the omniscient narrator says:

> Whites might dirty *her* all right, but not her best thing, her beautiful magical best thing- the part of her that was clean. (296)

However, the community brings Sethe out of her internalized imaginary world to reality. Later, it is Paul D, who makes Sethe realize the fact that she is her own best thing and as her 'Beloved'. He insists "you your best thing Sethe. You are". (322) Sethe's responding words "Me? Me?" (322) expresses the recognition of her

individual identity and she finally succeeds in claiming her own subjectivity.

Once again Paul D repeats his desire to start a new life with Sethe and Denver and by bringing Sethe to the present world, he also insists her to think about the future: "me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow". (322) *Beloved's* departure makes it difficult for Sethe to come out of her past. But Paul D's optimistic and buoyant words enable her to consider herself as her best thing. In this process, it is the absent influence of *Beloved* that makes Sethe re-enunciate her 'self definition'. Thereby Morrison shows that Sethe's journey towards 'self-restoration' has occurred by and through *Beloved.*

In *Beloved,* Morrison has devoted more attention and concentrated highly on the individual identity of mother in African-American community. In this novel alone, Morrison talks about the identity and subjectivity of a mother and thereby makes the reader realize the significance of mother's identity in black community.

Perez Torres says:

> Beloved transforms what has been a significant absence in the narrative of American cultural history- the exploitation and denial of black cultural identity into a powerful presence. (19)

In short, Morrison is triumphant in forging a voice and identity in black characters, especially mothers, which is shown through Sethe in *Beloved.* Morrison takes the challenging task of making the black women realize their power and individuality by writing all her novels in that perspective. *Beloved* is one such novel in which, she talks about the significance of self-definition and self-respect of a black mother in the African-American society.

Generally, mother is always compelled to live within the four walls of her house because of which she never thought of an identity of her own. But in this novel, Morrison presents a unique and new image of mother

who ultimately succeeds in restoring her identity at the end of the novel. In *Beloved*, it is Paul D who gives immense support to Sethe, who accomplishes her identity. Like others, she was also living for the sake of her daughter Denver and then dedicated all her life to her imagined daughter *Beloved*, but only after her disappearance, Sethe becomes conscious of her own individuality.

A human being has to live for his or her own sake by valuing one's 'self' and then only they can live for others. But in Sethe's case' it goes awry and later she realizes the importance of her 'self'. Sophie Loren says:

> When you are a mother, you are never really alone in your thoughts. A mother has to think twice, once for herself and once for her children. (http://www. dayformothers.com/)

Morrison opines in the manner of Sophie, telling that the primary duty of mother is to think about herself first and then for her children.

Lack of the knowledge of mothering, absence of father figure in family, racism, and sexual oppression are some of the major problems that black mothers have faced during the institution of slavery. In addition to this, they lacked enough courage to overcome these problems because whites have denied black's strength.

Whites' supremacy has denied a respectable and reputable position for black women, especially mothers in African-American community. However, black woman writer like Toni Morrison, depicts Sethe as a black mother who ultimately succeeds in claiming her own identity and thereby makes other ignored black mothers to follow her footsteps.

Empowerment of black mother is one such interesting and motivating aspect, which Morrison attempts in *Beloved*. Morrison put forth the new mother image, with an identity of her own, in order to persuade black mothers to develop themselves like Sethe. Morrison ends the novel *Beloved*, with the successful emergence of black consciousness in

Sethe, the symbolic maternal figure of the novel. Through this, Morrison calls for the empowerment of black women and their subjectivity. Sethe, by claiming her identity as a black mother breaks the stereotypical motherhood of African-American community and in that way remains unique among other mother images explored by Toni Morrison in her novels.

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7

The Rise of Feminism in India

Ashok Hulibandi *

Feminism as a literary theory entered the academic circle in the late 1960's with the advent of Post-structuralism. The movement is different from the traditional approaches of literary criticism in the sense that it does not emerges from or address itself to literature in practice. The post-Structuralist theory asserts that literature can be written according to the theory. As Jaidev in his learned article "Problematising Feminism" points out "Such a premise seems depressing because it expects literature to learn from a theory. In any case, several post-structuralists are feminists' aesthetics. A feminist literary theory which, out of politeness, is supposed to illumine past texts but actually will be fulfilled an expressly written texts for theory. (Moi, Toril, 48-63)

Women are an integral part of human civilisation. No society or country can ever progress without an active participation of women in its general development. Although the place of women in society has differed from

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culture to culture and from age to age, yet one fact is common to almost all societies is that women has never been considered the equal of man. Her status largely depends on the simple biological fact that she is the bearer of children whose care is her responsibility. Thus, her sphere is usually restricted to the familial roles.

Since time immemorial women has been the victim of male domination and oppression, and treated like a beast of burden and an object for pleasure. Man has always, looked down upon women as the weaker sex. The religions of the world have given sanction to the female's subjugation to the male. According to Marry Caruther, "Traditionally women's lives have been imagined in relation to men's lives as the daughters, mothers, mistresses, wives of men. They have in consequence been imagined either in terms of a single role psychologically important men (Virgin, Temptress, Goddess) or in terms of their single social and biological function in male society (preparing for marriage, or married)".(Cruther, 20)

In Hindu religion Manu constantly stresses that the inferiority of women to men. Munu starts with the fundamental principle that through her existence women must remain dependant on man.

In Indian classical literature a women is always shown in relationship to man. The husband and wife relationship is given more importance than the daughter, father, sister, brother, and mother relationship. A traditionally good woman is always synonymous with good wife. A good wife must be chaste and faithful like Sita or Savitri. For both men and women in Hindu society the ideal women has been traditionally personified by Sita, who is portrayed in the Ramayana Sita's image as mother is glorified and she is repeatedly referred to as Mata Sita but as a wife she is subjected to the whims of her husband who abandons her only because of the derogatory remarks of a commoner. However one finds that Sita shows same sign of awareness of being wronged and refused to go

back to Rama and finally took refuse in the lap of Mother Earth.

In India, we have a number of women writers in English such as Toru Dutta, Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Markanday, Anita Desai, Kamal Das and many other writers who have contributed to almost every genre of literature and deal with the theme of women emancipation. The subaltern have now started speaking and the margin has occupied the centre. Their writings have to some extent, changed the mentality of males and the result is that many seminars-national and international and symposia are being organised on women literature, feminism, women empowerment all over the world. Feminism is a political perception based on two fundamental premises: 1) that gender difference is the foundation of a structural inequality between women and men, by which women suffers systematic social injustice, and 2) that the inequality between the sexes is not the result of biological necessity but is produced by the cultural construction of gender difference.

Feminism emerged in the Western world as a movement in support of the same rights and opportunities for women as for men. Feminism means, "Both the awareness of women's position in society as one of disadvantages or inequality compared with that of men and also a desire to remove those disadvantages" (BGWS, 20)

Feminism has been subtly handled in the massive work of English novels in India. Feminism is defined as cultural, economic and political movements that are focussed towards establishing legal protection and complete equality for the women. In Indian writing feminism has been used as a modest attempt for evaluating the real social scenario as far as women are concerned. The Indian English novelists use oriental approaches of feminism. There are several novels in English literature of India that aptly portrays the actual status of the women in Indian societies. However, the modern aged women

have realised that they are equally competent like the men and that they are not helpless. Unlike the past when men were considered as the sole bread earners, in today's age, women too have become direct money earners of any household. All these changes and evolvement have actually influenced the English novelists and that is what is getting reflected in their write-ups. Today's contemporary Indian English novelists are writing for the masses using the theme of feminism, which not only interests the readers but also affects them. Throughout the world, feminism has generated interest amongst the people and India is no exception. Feminism is thoroughly accomplished through the work of the Indian English novelists.

"In childhood a female should be depend on her father, in youth on her husband and after the death of her husband on her children, in olden aged their sons or daughter-in-law. If she has no sons or the near kinsmen of her husband; if she be left no kinsmen on those of her father, if she has no paternal kinsmen on the sovereign, a women must never seek independence."(Manu, 14-15)

Development of Feminism in India

In India, feminism is looked at as a practical effort. Right from the past, women have faced several problems and they have been exploited by the men and the society at large. They have been constantly struggling to find a meaningful and respectable position for themselves. Women have always been portrayed as subservient and passive. With the introduction of Western education and with the growth of women's institutions, things had begun to change. It led to the commencement of women education in India. All these developments had helped in inculcating the sense of individuality among the women. These changes helped in developing the feminism trend in English novels writing patterns of India. This concept was misinterpreted as womanhood movement in India. Feminist ideologies strongly influence the Indian literature

and English novels. The concept of feminist ideologies had precisely come from the West. Today's women are educated and economically independent. They search for their own identity. All these changing images of Indian women are portrayed in the write-ups of the contemporary Indian novelists.

Feministic based English novels in India

There are several Indian novelists who produced their novels that revealed the truth of Indian societies and how women are being treated here. They present the aspects of feminism with authentic and impressive language. The struggle of an Indian woman for her true identity clearly emerges in the Indian English novels. Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli*, Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us*, Gita Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* are some of the novels that uses this theme of feminism and highlights the status of a woman in Indian societies. Anita Desai's *Cry the Peacock, Where Shall We Go This Summer?* and *Voices in the City* are some of the examples of feministic theory based English novels. More authors like Gita Mehta, Shama Futehally and Nisha Da Cunha work exclusively on feminine themes and emotional crisis faced by a woman. Kamala Markandaya and Kamala Das are two well renowned feminist writers in India. Some more examples of female subjectivity oriented English novels of India are Ruth Prawar Jhabvala's *To Whom She Will*, Kamala Markandaya's *Two Virgins* and Santha Rama Rau's *Remember the House*.

The Indian English novels based on feminism and its different aspects depict the position of a woman in general. She has been portrayed as the key figure of Indian families and at the same time she has been projected as the subject of suffering, domestic slavery and suppression. The hidden thoughts, feelings and the realization of a woman are found in the feministic oriented English novels of India.

The aim of this research paper is to bring the light contributions of those women activists who not only spoke with astonishing freedom but also were the achievers in the field of women emancipation. It is they who paved the way for the women writers whose writing are available today in abundance. It is also the endeavour of those women who are the foundation stones of the great edifice of feminism

The male authors depicted women as objects of pleasure. They never allowed the female characters to develop themselves into autonomous beings. They exerted a lot of violence on female passivity and projected male chauvinism in its extreme. Virginia Woolf quotes Coleridge of 'Androgynous Personality' in *Room of One's Own* to uphold the view that "the great mind is androgynous (Woolf, 103) the androgynous mind accepts the quality of both the sexes and equal justice is given to man-womanly relationship. "If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect and a woman also must have intercourse with the man is in her. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot, any more than a mind that is purely feminine. But it would be well to test what one meant by man-womanly, and conversely by women-manly, by passing and looking at a book or two (Woolf, 103)

Woolf criticises Galsworthy and Kipling for their excessive masculine qualities and there was not even "a spark of the woman" (Woolf, 106). Virginia Woolf points out William Shakespeare as the classical master of an androgynous mind. It is only through a pull towards the apposite sex, a writer can create androgynous qualities in her writings: "The androgynous mind is resonant and porous; that it transmits emotion without impediment; that it is naturally creative incandescent and undivided". (Woolf, 103)

Anita Desai as Indian women novelist has given a new dimension to the Indian literature. Indian English

literature has developed over a period of time and writing in English did not start in a day. It took many years and several distinguished personalities to bring the present status and distinction to Indian English literature. Indian literature is not only about novels, it is also about poetries and short stories. Before the rise of novels, several women writers composed songs, short stories and small plays. It is still believed that women are the upholders of the rich Indian tradition of fables, story telling and more. In the mid-nineteenth century, more women started to write in the English language. With the passage of time, English literature has witnessed several changes in the writing patterns. Women novelists have incorporated the recurring female experiences in their writings and it affected the cultural and language patterns of Indian literature. They have brought a stylized pattern in the whole context of Indian writing. Nowadays, people enjoy reading the anglicized novels presented by the new age women writers.

In the past, the work by the Indian women authors has always been undervalued because of some patriarchal assumptions. Indian societies gave priorities to the worth of male experiences. In those days, women used to write about a woman's perception and experiences within the enclosed domestic arena. On the other hand, male authors used to deal with heavy themes. Thus, it was assumed that their work would get more priority and acceptance in the society. During the 18th century, these factors led towards the decline of Indian women writing. And with all these factors, production of women's literature declined further. In the 19th century, more and more women actively participated in India's reformist movement against the British rule. It again led to the women's literature. At that time, their write-ups mainly concentrated on the country's freedom struggle. Over the years, the world of feminist ideologies began to influence the English literature of India.

In the 20th century, women's writing was considered as a powerful medium of modernism and feminist statements. The last two decades have witnessed phenomenal success in feminist writings of Indian English literature. Today is the generation of those women writers who have money and are mostly western educated. Their novels consist of the latest burning issues related with women as well as those issues that exist in the society since long. These books are thoroughly enjoyed by the masses and the publishers make easy money out of them. The publishers feel that the literature actually survives because of these types of bold topics and commercials used by the women novelists. They describe the whole world of women with simply stunning frankness. Their write-ups give a glimpse of the unexplored female psyche, which has no accessibility. The majority of these novels depict the psychological suffering of the frustrated housewife.

Women's writing was not at all organised in the beginning. Women could only voice their protest against the male dominated world. The Feministic criticism is a relatively new branch of literary criticism. It developed mainly within the academic circuits in U.K and U.S.A, during the 1970s and subsequently spread to other parts of the world. Feministic criticism never had a commonly approved methodology for evaluating literary text. American Feminism has been more concerned with women's literature.

Women writers were not free to explore the female consciousness as they were always under Shobha De Since long; feminism has been used by the women novelists. Their novels reflect that the present age women have realized that she is not helpless and is not dependent. They feel that a woman is an equal competent just like a man. Today, a woman has also become a direct money earner and she is not only confined to household works. The women of modern era think on different lines and that is what is depicted in the novels of the Indian women

authors. These facts are incorporated by the women writers. Indian women writers explores the feminine subjectivity and applies the theme that ranges from childhood to complete womanhood. Through their novels they spread the message of what actually feminism is, which actually is very broad. These women writers say that feminism means putting an end to all the sufferings of a woman in silence.

Authors like Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande and Anita Desai have chosen the problems and issues faced by the women in today's male dominated world as the main theme of their books. For instance, some of the novels of Anita Desai like 'Voices in the City' and 'Where Shall We Go This Summer?' she has portrayed the complexities between a man and woman relationship. She has tried to explore the psychological aspects of the lead protagonists. The women novelists try to create awareness that this is the time to proclaim with definite precision. In India, the women writers are doing very well and their contribution is immense.

Indian English writing started with authors like Sarojini Naidu. This great poetess charmed the readers with her writings. Feminism themes have also been used by authors like Nayantara Sahgal and Rama Mehta. Regional fiction theme has been aptly used by Kamala Das, Anita Nair and Susan Viswanathan. Novelists like Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai captured the spirit of Indian cultures and its traditional values. During the 1990's India became a popular literary nation as a number of women authors made their debut in this era. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Suniti Namjoshi and Anuradha Marwah Roy used realism as main theme of their novels. The list of Indian women novelists also comprises popular names such as Bharati Mukherjee, Nergis Dalal, Krishna Sobti, Dina Mehta, Indira Goswami, Malati Chendur, Gauri Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Ruth Jhabvala, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Jhumpa Lahiri and many more. They are known for the contemporary

approach in their novels. The novels of authors like Namita Gokhale or Shobha De are really out-spoken. Most of these female novelists are known for their bold views that are reflected in their novels. Basically, these are the novels of protest and an outburst of reservations and contaminations. Unlike the past, where the works of women novelists were given less priority and were actually undervalued, classification of feministic or male writings hardly makes any sense today.

The women activists have actually given a meaning to feminism. Feminism has become a " place where in the most natural organic subjectivity and politics have to come together"(Sara Sulleri, 345) It is an explanation as to how power imbalances due to gender either in patriarchal family system or in social education, economic and religious orientation. Its (feminism's) goal is to promote discovery and re-evaluation of literature by women, and to examine social, cultural, and psychosexual contexts of literature and literary criticism. The credit must be given to the women activists who brought sexual, social and political issues were once the study of literature otherwise these issues were once thought to be "outside' the study of literature. It is due to the performance of these activists that women's issues are now being considered as social issues or national/ international issues and women are now enjoying a much better position and now moving forward in every field of life. They have really started speaking.

Majority of the Indian readers comprising both male and female read the novels of the Indian women authors with certain expectations. They look for some "Indian-ness` in the write-ups. Only the women novelists of India are capable of conveying the messages of feminism in an Indian way.

Feminism in Indian literature, as can be most commonly conceived is a much sublime and over-the-top concept, which is most subtly handled under restricted circumstances. With advancement of time, however,

feminism has been accepted in India, setting aside the patriarchal predomination to certain extent. Leaving aside the activists and crusaders of the political and social scenario, perhaps massive work of feminism is also accomplished through Indian literature. Yet, prior to comprehending a more intense look into feminist literature in India, it is necessary to grasp the essential concept of the term 'feminism' in the country's context, beginning from its inception. The history of feminism in India can be looked at as principally a "practical effort".

Beginning from the first inception of the Universe, there is a fascinating myth associated with the creation of woman by the Supreme Creator, Lord Brahma. And indeed, beginning from Brahma Himself, the idea of feminism in Indian literature, both oral and written, had begun to be established, though perhaps not as blatant as is today. It is said that Brahma had first created man and in his generosity, had desired to give man a companion. But by then he had depleted all the material in the creation of man and hence he had borrowed umpteen components from the handsome creation of nature and had thus made woman out of them. Lord Brahma had introduced woman to his earlier creation man stating, "She will serve you lifelong and if you cannot live with her, neither can you live without her". The primeval myth carries an unambiguous implication of woman's image in life and literature for centuries.

The World's two of the most prehistoric greatest epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* written by two sages Valmiki and Ved Vyas have been composed pivoting around two central characters Sita and Draupadi, both women. It was during this time that the nascent stages of feminism was born in ancient Indian literature, the illustration of which needs no further introduction - the tribulations of both Sita and Draupadi is perhaps realised by every Indian presently. The key role women played in literature and life in the past and present in both parts of the globe is equally significant. In ancient Vedic

literature, women were elevated to Devi (Goddesses); they were turned into myths and legends. Her real identity of a woman however was provided by the primordial myth, that is social stereotypes which have been suggested, are two poles of feminine experience in the world. Sita absorbs all harshly imposed desolation and mortification of the male ego, whereas, Draupadi challenges the male ego to the epitomic limits of human excellence. Sita accepts, accommodates and withdraws; Draupadi resents, rejects and involves herself in the process of life as a protagonist. These two feminine archetypes define the limits of feminine experience in reality, especially the Indian literary reality. Even in the present day Indian literature, the gender division moves between new 'iconisations' of these two bold and prehistoric figures.

If coming down more down the line, keeping aside the predominated 'Hinduistic' beliefs of Vedic Period, the post-Christian era in its just-blooming period, also has retained visions of feminism, not surprisingly from a woman, but from a man. Times during those that is being mentioned, the Indian indigenous cultural background was not much doused within anti-womanly sentiments and badgering the fairer sex with ungainly measures. Literature was not a subject that needed to be left behind, which with time, had gained pace, thus beginning to carve a new way of introducing feminism in Indian literature. It is rather ironical that in India, the premier people who had come forward to claim 'women's rights' were not women but were men. Balaram Das, a poet well known in Orissa was a pioneer of feminism in India. It can be said that long before the idea of feminism had come up in Europe Balaram Das, a poet of the 16th century had brought forth the concept of male domination of women in a strictly patriarchal society.

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8

Feminist Concerns in the Fictions of Anita Desai

*Dr. S. Kanakaraj**

> Feminist critics generally agree that the oppression of women is a facto life, that gender leaves its traces in literary texts and on literary history, and the feminist literary criticism plays a worthwhile part in the struggle to end oppression in the world outside of texts. When they turn their attention to social history, most feminist agree that oppression of ethnic and racial minorities, gay men lesbians, and working class people closely tied to the oppression of women....[1]

Historically speaking, feminism has been associated in the United States with the struggle for women's political enfranchisement.

Historically feminist energy is directed toward ameliorating the material realities of gender-based oppression, in terms of economics (where women consistently earn and own less than men, as a group),

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social and familiar arrangements (where domestic violence and rape victimize more women than men) and mass culture (where pornography and high fashion perpectuate the notion that women's bodies, more than men's are sexual objects).

In its most comprehensive sense the rubric **women's rights** encompasses the conditions of women's entitlement to live to the fullest potential, as human beings in equality. Women's rights are human rights that have been withheld from women because they are women. Women's rights, more than a quest for technical equality, stand for a struggle for the liberation of women. In this context, Judith Butler explains thus:

> The political assumption that there must be a universal basis for feminism, one which must be found in an identity assumed to exist cross-culturally, often accompanies the notion that the oppression of women has come singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination....[2]

The assumption that persist is that women are fundamentally different from men and this has been the cause of the subordination of women. Patriarchy is justified by the biological differences between men and women, and is the causative factor of an universal oppression of women by men. It is argued, then, that the differences of women men is the chief reason of women being oppressed, denied, exploited, and dehumanized. This is the fate of the female protagonists of Anita Desai. In this connection Adrienne Rich makes a pointed observation, which is worth quoting here:

> Patriarchy is the power of the fathers, a familial, ideological, political system in which men by force direct pressure or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education and the division of labour determine what part women

> shall play or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male...[3]

The argument that runs is that only with the approval of the male, and to the extent that patriarchy is willing to accede, a woman can enjoy anything of privilege or influence. This has led to the pessimistic depiction of women as the innocent, passive, powerless victims of male violence. Kate Millet has the following observation to make:

> The social control of women in free society was not carried out through a rigid authoritarian system of force. Rather it took place by means of the engineering of consent among women themselves. Instead of being openly coerced into accepting their secondary status, women were conditioned into embracing it by them process of sex role stereotyping. ...From early childhood, women are trained to accept a system, which divided society into male and female spheres, with appropriates roles for each, and which allocated public power exclusively to the male sphere...[4]

There is always the tendency to hurt and insult the female because of her biological inferiority. The history of patriarchy presents a variety of cruelties and barbarities: suttee executions in India, the crippling deformity of foot binding in China, the life long ignominy of the veil in Islamic countries, or the wide spread persecution of sequestration, the gynacium, and purdah. Phenomenon such as clictroidectomy, clitoral incision, the sale and enslavement of women under one guise or another, involuntary and child marriages, concubinage and prostitution still take place – the first in Africa and the latter in the Near and Far East, and the last generally.

Freud pays chivalrous compliment to the female arguing that the woman is the most beautiful thing that the world can offer. And the women is the ideal of womanhood and motherhood. This is the sentiment

expressed either directly or in a veiled manner by the male characters in the fictions of Anita Desai.

Nature has determined woman's destiny through beauty, charm and sweetness. It is an acknowledge fact that woman submitted willingly to the social and sexual subjection of pairing.

Patriarchy tends to convert a woman into a sexual object. This is precisely the manner in which the male characters of Anita Desai look upon the women. But the woman doest not enjoy her sexuality, which is agreed to be her fate. Instead, she is made to suffer for and be ashamed of her sexuality. And women have been confined to the cultural level of animal life providing the male with sexual outlet and exercising the animal functions of reproduction, and care of the young.

In public or private, the female body is the primary site of women's oppression. In status and in symbolic meaning, sexual and reproductive exploitation sets women apart. The exploitation of women's sexuality and procreation begins in the home, denying women full and equal access to resources, devaluing their labour, confining them to private and informal economics. As society develops, those exploitation take on public dimensions in the social, economic, and political worlds. Shulamith Firestone's strong argument runs as follows:

> "**That?** Why can't change **that!** You must be out of your mind!" – is the closet to the truth... This gut reaction – the assumption that, even when they don't know it, feminist are talking about changing a fundamental biological condition – is an honest one. That so profound a change cannot be easily fit into traditional categories of thought, e.g., "political", is not because these categories do not apply but because they are not big enough: radical feminist bursts through them. If there were another word more all embracing than **revolution** we would use it... [5]

Therefore, feminists argue for a change in the attitude of men to ensure that women are not exploited. At the same time women must alter their approaches and stances so as not to be exploited. Life is basically one of flux. And a change is not hard to find and to practice.

To achieve women's rights the present distinctions between men and women will have to disappear. Sex differences are gender political constructions of patriarchal power; they are neither physical nor natural facts. The differences constructed from the physical, sexual and reproductive unlikeness of women and men have been used to set women apart, treat them as lesser, relegate them to the "other", giving meaning to the observable physical characteristics by which the sexes differ. The move of the feminist is to re-sensitize the fractured consciousness of the males. But the problem goes deeper. Everywhere it is the division based on 'vin and yang'.

The 'vin and yang' division pervades all culture, history, economics and nature. And modern versions of sex discrimination are only the most recent layer. Feminist have to question, not just all of western culture, but the organization of culture itself, and above all even more the very organization of nature. In this context,

Simone de Beauvoir's observation becomes relevant:

> Man never thinks of himself without thinking of the other; he views the world under the sign of duality which is not in the first place sexual in character. But being different from man, who sets himself up as the Same, it is naturally to the category of the Other that woman is consigned; the other includes woman...[6]

Sexuality and reproduction have been made political; they are used to deny full human rights to women and prevent them from living to their full potential. Shulamith Firestone lists the fundamental facts adequately thus:

> The basic reproductive unit of male / female /

infant, in whatever form of social organization – is characterized by these fundamental – if not immutable facts:

1. That women throughout history before the advent of birth control were at the continual mercy of their biology – menstruation, menopause, and "female ills". Constant painful childbirth, wet-nursing, and care of infants, all of which made them dependent on males (whether brother, father, husband, or clan, government, community-at-large) for physical survival.
2. That human infants take an even longer time to grow up than animals, and thus are helpless and, for some short period at least, dependent on adults for physical survival.
3. That a basic mother/child interdependency has existed in some form in every society, past or present, and thus has shaped the psychology of every nature female and every infant.
4. That the natural reproductive difference between the sexes led directly to the first division of labour at the origins of class, as well as furnishing the paradigm of caste discrimination based on biological characteristics....[7]

At this point it is imperative to quote the observation of Simone de Beauvoir, which runs as follows:

> The theory of historical materialism has brought to light some important truths. Humanity is not an animal species, it is historical reality. Human society is an anti-physics – in a sense it is against nature; it does not passively submit to the presence of nature; but rather takes over the control of nature on its own behalf. This arrogation is not an inward, subjective operation; it is accompanied objectively in practical action...[8]

Racism combined with sexism is the foundation of white, male power. It is of interest to record the assertion observation for Friedrich Engels:

> Though the sex class system may have originated in fundamental biological conditions, this does not guarantee once the biological basis of their oppression has been swept away that women and children will be freed. On the contrary, the new technology, especially fertility control, may be used against them to reinforce the entrenched system of exploitation...[9]

In such a context in the radical feminist view, the new feminism is not just the revival of a serious political movement for social equality. The following observation of Friedrich Engels becomes relevant here;

> From its very beginning the feminist movement posed a serious threat to the established order, its very existence and long duration testifying to fundamental inequalities in a system that pretended to democracy...[10]

Women's oppression is simultaneously global and culturally specific. Sexual and reproductive exploitation of women is culturally encoded in diverse national, racial and ethnic contexts; violations of women are culturally specific as genital mutilation in Africa, or pornography in Europe, and the United States. The uses of women as private or public sexual property are variously justified by cultural traditions, religious beliefs and secular values that promote ideas of female inferiority. Ideas to bit subordinate people, however, power does.

Physical abuse against women is a worldwide phenomenon facilitated by entrenched social, economic, religious and legal institutions emphasizing female subordination. Under such circumstances, Women's rights and women's liberation required universal standards that supercede the ideological and justification of cultural relativism.

With such a clear knowledge of what patriarchy has devised and designed for women and the persistent female psyche operating at the level of submissiveness, servility, and inferiority, Anita Desai portrays the female characters in her fictions. Anita Desai as the Indian women writer of real distinction has always asserted her own worth as a woman to defend women against the dominant society's demeaning male oppression.

To begin with, Anita Desai in her fiction, **Cry the Peacock**, projects Maya as the women who suffers pangs of misery just because she is a women. Maya always sees the Cross of suffering before her. Anita Desai distils Maya's misery cryptically as follows;

> It was mine (Maya's) that was hell. Torture, guilt, dread, imprisonment – these were the four walls of my private hell, one that no one could survive of long. Death was certain...[11]

The following textual passage also attests the fact that Gautama fails to understand the feelings and thoughts of Maya, which causes her suffering because of his indifference towards her and his neglect her:

> Telling me to go to sleep while he worked at his papers, he did not give another thought to me (Maya), to either the soft willing body or the lonely, wanting mind that waited near his bed. And now seeing me bereaved, seeing tears on my face and my get gone, "You need a cup of tea", he (Gauthama) said.

Yes, I cried, yes it is his hardness – no, no, not his hardness, but his distance he coldly keeps from me. His coldness, his coldness, and incessant talk up cups of tea and philosophy in order not to hear me talk and, talking, reveal myself. It is that – m y loneliness in this house. And I clenched my hands again, so that the skin stretched, streams of blood rose and plunged. But when I closed my eyes, they vanished – like the liquid mirror, the black

frame of the door, the scarlet blouse flung upon the floor like an abandoned flag. They all dropped from me, disappeared...[12]

Maya suffers from Father-Fixation. She has been a wayward, and high strung child, who always rushes to her father in distress. He will then hold her in his arms, wash the tears from her face, and utter these mesmerizing words:

> It will all be well soon...[13]

Maya experiences fear psychosis, all because she is a mere cog in the wheel of the male dominated world. Anita Desai projects Maya's fear psychosis as follows:

> A persistent sense of some disaster I had known, and forgotten, or perhaps never known, only at one time, feared, and now rediscovered. But what was it? A grain of sand itching, itching upon the tender infant skin of my new sorrow. Yet no merge grain. Far more important. Not merely a foreboding, but a distant apprehension of a presence...
>
> I (Maya) rushed to the door, the ayah seized the scroll. He (astrologer) grew perturbed, peremptory. "Sit down", he snapped, like a whip, "For there only a chance, a faint possibility that her life should take this path. The sing is there. The starts prophesy it. But we are in the hands of God...[14]

Maya's despotic father, her brother, Arjuna, who rebelled against the authority of her father, and the prophesy of the albino astrologer continue to tilt the balance in her mind. The prophesy of disaster fills her mind with apprehension, anxiety and tension – Angs – and stresses and strains – **Sturm-und-Drang.** These lead to the dramatic changes in her, and cause her suffering.

Sita, the protagonist of **Where Shall we Go This Summer?** is born and brought up in an atmosphere of

male neglect, male hypocrisy and male partiality. She is completely neglected by her father, who has no time to spare for his children. Sita's husband Raman is indifferent towards her and neglects her. Hence she suffers in a male dominated world.

Sita, the anguished soul, is fed up with the dreary metropolitan Bombay. Her father is – Fixation is an hindrance in her life. Sita feels like a fish out of water in her father-in-law's age-old rooted flat. She suffers fro a life of subhuman placidity, calmness, and sluggishness all because she is not allowed to be her own self in the male dominated world. Through Sita, Anita Desai projects the dehumanizing and destabilizing actors that cause suffering to women like Sita.

It can also be said that Sita suffers because she is not able to put up with the animal existence of human beings. Sita cries out thus:

> They are nothing... nothing but appetite and sex. Only food, sex and money matter. Animals....[15]

Sita feels her skin burn every time she sees her father caressing her sister, Rekha, which borders on Father-Daughter incest, not as refined as between Humaber-Humbert and Lolita in Vladmir Nabokov's **Lolita.** The situation breeds contempt in her for her father and her sister, Rekha, and it goes deep into her psyche. Sita feels trapped in a world of hypocrites – the islanders, the chelas, Rekha, and her father. And her stay in the urban atmosphere of Bombay with her husband, Raman, and then in Manori island home of her father taken care of by Moses and Miriam after the death of her father, and away from Raman, does not offer or promise her peace. Sita continues to suffer in the male dominated world wherever she is stationed.

The observation of Carol Pearson is worth quoting here for it admirably attests of the suffering condition of Sarah in Anita Desai's **Bye-Bye Blackbird:**

> The pressure to conform, to do one's duty, to do what others want is strong for women ... because women's role has been defined in terms of nurturance and duty ...one of the worst things a woman can do for a man's soul is to allow him to oppress here...[16]

The disharmony in the married life of Adit and Sarah in Anita Desai's **Bye-Bye Blackbird** is largely due to the cultural divide, which both experience acutely. In this respect the suffering of Sarah is greater for she simply is not able to adjust to the ways of the Orientals. The following instance argues to the point that is made and it revolves around Bruce and other pets of which Sarah is found of and Adit is not prepared to tolerate.

The textual passage makes interesting reading and it runs thus:

> "Where's Bruce?" she cried. "Did you let him out, Adit? You should not have, you know how he is these days."
>
> "I let him out", Dev confessed unwillingly. "But how is he these days?"
>
> "On heat," she said.
> "Oh, I didn't know. I picked up the tea cosy and reared out like a cobra".
>
> Sarah smiled at his smile and sat at the tea cosy on the tea pot.
>
> "But it's full of cat's hairs", Dev protested.
> "They make very good insulation", Sarah told him, lighting herself a cigarette to go with her cup of tea.
>
> "What a house! You keep pets for insulation"....[17]

In the fiction, **The Village by the Sea,** Anita Desai argues that the sufferings of the girls, Bim and Lila, are due to the irresponsible attitudes and approaches of their father. The following textual passage makes interesting reading:

> "Father's still ,lying there, asleep.
> He sleeps all day. He will only get up at night and go straight to the toddy shop", Lila said, almost crying.
>
> "Let him", said Hari.
>
> "Hari, he will kill himself drinking the toddy those wicked men make and sell".
> "Let him", Hari said again, chewing.
> "And mother? And mother?" cried Lila. "And us? What about us? Who will look after us?"...[18]

Anita Desai portrays Sophie in her fiction, **Journey to Ithaca,** suffering because of the husband who fails to understand her and her cultural ways. The following textual passage attests this:

> Yet when Matteo came to her in the night, she (Sophie) fought him off fiercely. "I can't – I can't her, in his zoo. I want to go away. I want us to be by ourselves".
>
> "By ourselves", Matteo withdrew in distress. "By ourselves we will never come to know India".
>
> "Why not? I want to go to Goa and eat shrimp. I want to go to Kashmir and live in a houseboat. And lie in the sun and shampoo my hair and eat omelettes all day"....[19]

The disharmony that prevailed in the home of Matteo

and Sophie results in Sophies suffering in the company of a man who fails to understand her feelings and thoughts, and desires. Another textual passage stands testimony to this:

> Matteo lay with his limbs spread out, wanting only to sleep. Why should she not lie down quietly and let him sleep? He groaned,
>
> "What do you want, Sophie?"
> "I want to know why we are (in India)?"
> "I told you – to find India, to understand India, and the mystery at the heart of India".
>
> "I (Sophie) have found it. And its heart is a dead child. A dead Matteo!"...[20]

Turning one's attention on to the other fiction of Anita Desai namely, **Fire on the Mountain,** it is recorded here that the rapist, Preet Singh, who is debased character expressed his disgust of Ila Das, whom he rapes. Like Vladmir Nabokov, the Russian American meta-fictionist and postmodern fictionist of repute, Anita Desai deals with the theme of rape quite adroitly, and subtly and with great artistic finesse. The following passage clarifies this:

> ... She staggered under its weight with a gasp that ripped through her chest. It had her by the throat. She struggled, chocking trying to stretch and stretch that gasp till it became a shout, a shout that the villagers would hear, the red dog would hear, a shout for help. But the fingers tightened. Now she tore her mouth open for breath, now she opened her eyes till they boggled, and popped, and stood out of her head as she saw, in the cold shadow that it was Preet Singh, his lips lifted back from his teeth, his eyes blazing down at her in rage, in a passion of rage. She lifted her hands

> to dislodge him from her throat, and she did not dislodge them. They fell away, but only to tear away at the cotton scarf that hung about his neck, only to wrap that about her throat tighter, tighter, tighter, so that last gasp rattled inside her, choked and rattled and was still.... Crushed, crushed down into her earth, she lay raped, broken, still and finished. Now it was dark...[21]

Feminist criticism underscores the need to listen to women recreate their own experiences through art, and to discern areas of commonality which grow out of their designation as a group, and which affect creative vision.

It is interesting to note that Anita Desai's awareness of a feminist perspective, particularly as it illuminates the experiences of women, is demonstrated in relation to other social issues. In addition, Anita Desai has presented her vision of humanity, the affirmation of the human spirit, in all her fictions.

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9

Gender Bias in Freedom of Speech in Kamala Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire*

P. Kannan

Introduction

Taking birth with Bankim Chandra Chatterji's *Raj Mohan's Wife* in 1935, Indian English Novel has grown breadth and width and is endowed with a prestigious position at the international level at present. If the emergence of English novels by Indian women writers marks an epoch in the history of Indian English Novel, the observation of Indira Nityanandam that "the first important woman novelist to enrich Indian Fiction in English was Kamala Markandaya"[1] is far from untrue. Kamala Markandaya occupies a distinct position among Indian women novelists in English She is regarded as "an unquestionably the most outstanding"[2] of the post World War II period in India.

She has observed the Indian women very closely and found that they have continued to be feminine without much radical change in their outlook ever after Independence. She rendered a fictional representation of

how Indian women have internalized the act of suppressing and hiding their likes and dislikes for the sake of substance of the social institutions of marriage and family in her third novel *A Silence of Desire* which Iyengar considers to be "her most ambitious novel".[3] This paper attempts to examine the couple Dandekar and Sarojini and evinces that while the former gives vent to his thoughts and feelings, the latter suppresses her thoughts and feelings. The study also aims to highlight that gender bias in freedom of speech prevails in the society even after Independence.

A Brief Note on the Plot of *A Silence of Desire*

The plot of *A Silence of Desire* is woven around what Amar Nath Prasad describes as unfolding "of the layers of the spiritual reality and mystic vision of India."[4] In the smooth-going family life of Dandekar, a crisis takes place. He observes that his wife pays visit to a mysterious person without his knowledge. As a result, he begins to suspect his wife's fidelity towards him. He begins to watch her movements secretly. Consequently, he discovers that she visits a god-man regularly. He suspects that his wife has got liaison with the god-man. Later he learns the truth that she has got a tumour in her womb and goes to the god-man as a devotee with the faith that it is through spiritualism she would be cured of the tumour. Therefore, she has refused to follow the advice of the doctor to get the tumour removed through surgery.

Dandekar considers that his wife's belief is unscientific and begins to grieve over his wife's ill-health. He moves earth and heaven to persuade his wife to undergo the operation in vain. He decides that removing the god-man from the town once for all is the only way for him to release his wife from her obsession with the belief that the god-man alone would save her life from the infection of the tumour. After trying various ways and means unsuccessfully, he seeks the help of the Collector who gets the god-man removed from the town.

Subsequently, his wife yields to his pressure and undergoes the operation. The narrative ends with Dandekar's satisfaction that he has restored his family by rescuing his wife not only from the tumour but also from her blind-belief in spiritualism.

Gender Bias in Freedom of Speech in *A Silence of Desire*

Though there was no inequality between man and woman in India during the pre-vedic times, it was introduced and nourished during the post-vedic times very systematically by the patriarchal institutions. Woman was taught to remain obedient to man both directly and indirectly. While the direct mode was observable in the parents instructing the girl-children to serve to the male members of the family without a word objection, the indirect mode could be seen in myths, stories, rituals, conventions, beliefs and laws etc which depict, insist, and reiterate that woman is inferior and subservient to man. When much practices for a long time, the woman began to believe and accept that she is meant serve the man. This process is known as internalization of inferiority. In India, several works of literature in the regional language and English have dealt with this theme with varied purposes. While some of them advocate such principles to the women, some others highlight the inequality between man and woman in our society implicitly.

Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire* belongs to the latter category. She shows how man continues to gain edge over woman and how woman could not become independent even after the nation has attained independence through the episodes of Dandekar-Sarojini couple. He is a senior clerk in a government office and his wife, Sarojini, is a housewife. They have three children, two daughters and one son. He is rational and she is spiritual in their respective outlooks. It is very important to note that the author shows that there is discrimination

between man and woman to articulate their priorities. She exhibits it by depicting that Dandekar is free to express his attitude regarding the mode worship as follows:

> The six rooms that they rented were built round a courtyard, a square of about eight feet with an uneven cement floor in the middle of which stood the divine tulsi that his wife worshiped. It was a small evergreen plant, crammed into bright and decorative brass in which it languished, surviving without health but with a sharp imperious smell that made you forget its look - a smell that clung to your hands until you had washed and scrubbed, and even after, and could haunt you if you did not pray. Dandekar did not pray to it, he was always careful to say; it was a plant; one did not worship plants: but it was a symbol of God whom one worshipped, and it was necessary that God should have symbols, since no man had the power to visualise Him. Dandekar often made this point in the office where he worked, where some of the clerks were Indian Christians, converts, zealous to mark the difference between worship of God and Idolatry.[5]

Sarojini's point of view is different from her husband's but there is depiction of her articulating it. It implies that she is not free to do so. On the contrary, the author describes Sarojini as subservient to her husband the illustration which is presented thus:

> She was a good wife, Sarojini: good with the children, an excellent cook, an efficient manager of his household, a woman who still gave him pleasure after fifteen years of marriage, less from the warmth of her response than from her unfailing acquiescence to his demands. ... Sarojini came to him when he wanted her, placidly; but since she had never done otherwise he did not miss the

> passion. She did most things placidly, he thought with affection; and from this calm proceeded the routine and the regularity that met the neat and orderly needs of his nature.[6]

When the life of Dandekar and Sarojini continues harmoniously, the theme of woman's desire and man's desire is introduced in the desires of Sarojini and Dandekar respectively. Sarojini learns that there is a tumour in her kidney and believes strongly that she could get rid of not through the scientific medication like surgery but through believing in spiritualism following the path of a god-man. Thus on learning that a god-man visits the town frequently and performs pujas for his followers, she becomes his devotee and participates in his prayers. She keeps a photograph of the god-man in the trunk box at home secretly and donates money and silver to the god-man piously. Thus Sarojini's desire is to believe in the god-man. Dandekar notices that his wife is not present at home on his return from his office on one day. When he enquires her, she replies that she has accompanied her cousin, Rajam, up to the bus stand. Unexpectedly, he meets Rajam and learns from her that she and his wife have not met each other for four months. Consequently he begins to suspect his wife's fidelity to him. He wants to discover the truth. Thus Dandekar's "desire to find out with whom she (Sarojini) was consorting".[7]

I would like to look at Sarojini's lies as a way of suppressing her freedom to speak out her priorities and at Dandekar's investigation of Sarojini's character as a way of oppressing woman. Let us observe the lies Sarojini tells. The first lie she tells is with regard to her absence in one evening when he comes back from office as given below:

> 'But where did you go at such an awkward time?' Dandekar's voice was sour. Relief at her return had obscured other issues, now the sense of

> grievance crept back. 'It was awkward time,' Sarojini busied herself filling the cups on the tray. 'But you know what people are, they do not always think of your convenience, and when my cousin called ----'Which cousin?' Cousin Rajam. I could not send her away in time.' ... But where did you go with her?' 'Only as far as the bus-stop.[8]

However, Dandekar happens to meet Rajam in the Market on the last day of the month as he used to go to market to buy presents to his wife and children on every last day of the month. When he interacts with her, she informs him that she has not met Sarojini for four months. On reaching home, he interrogates his wife on her previous statement that she has accompanied her cousin, Rajam, as far as the bus-stop. She tells another lie to manage her previous lie as follows: "Did you say Cousin Rajam?' He spoke almost without realising. Cousin rajam? No, I just said my cousins, the ones who used to live—? 'No, I mean before. You said she came to see you' 'When?' 'A few days ago. When you went to the bus-stop with her.' I said Pankajam. I said Cousin Pankajam, not Cousin Rajam."[9]

The second instance in Sarojini lies when her husband asks her for the key of trunk box. In that box, he has kept a geography in which it is stated that the roads and bridges have been constructed in India by the British. He, who is convinced that the people of India could have done the same without the help of the British, feels that his children should not read that book lest they would think Indians are inferior to the English. Hence, he rushes home and asks her wife to give him the key. Since she has kept the photograph of the god-man in the box secretly, she fears that her husband would see it and mistake her. In order to avoid the complex situation, she tells a lie like this:

> You had better give me the key before I forget

> again.' 'What key?' 'The key to the trunk. I must get rid of that book before one of the children gets hold of it.' 'Oh, there's no danger of that,' said Sarojini. 'The trunk's locked, and I have the key.' 'Well, it'll one job done,' urged Dandekar. 'It won't take a minute, if you will give me that key.' 'I don't know where it is' 'Isn't it on the bunch?' 'It is usually. But it was getting so rusty I took it out the other day to oil it, and I don't know where I can have put it. I'll have a good search tomorrow and let you have it.'[10]

However, Dandekar is able to get the key in the next morning itself. When he undergoes uneasiness due to lack of proper sleep last night, he happens to look down on the floor. Surprisingly he notices that the key bunch is lying there. He also finds that the trunk key which his wife has reported to be missing is also in the bunch. When he opens the trunk to take the geography book out, he comes across a photograph of an unknown man falling from one of the books. Since he is unable to identify the person, he gets confused. Then he hands over the key to his wife. At this juncture also, Sarojini utters a lie which is illustrated here under: " Your keys,' he croaked, and had to clear his throat before he could continue. 'They were lying on the floor.' 'I must have dropped them in my hurry this morning.' She took the keys from him and tucked the chain securely into her waistband. By the way,' she said. 'I found the trunk key last night. I meant to tell you, but I must have fallen asleep."[11]

The third occasion on which Sarojini lies is with reference to the photograph Dandekar has found in the trunk. When his colleagues discuss the character of women, he begins to apprehend that his wife may be in the pursuit of illicit relation with the man whose photograph Dandekar has seen in the trunk. After a few futile attempts, he tries a tactics. He pretends to describe the discussion

of his colleagues on some photographs to observe whether she would explain the photograph found in the trunk. Though she responds to it, her response is a lie which is depicted thus:

> We were talking about photographs in the office in the morning.' 'Oh were you?' He could see she was stifling a yawn. He felt a little sorry for her, briefly, but his affairs were more pressing. 'Yes. We were saying how extraordinary it was how people keep photographs, even if it's someone they hardly know.' 'Yes, isn't it? I was only saying to myself the other day——' He was astounded. He had actually succeeded in arousing her interest with his preposterous remarks. '——saying that really at my age it's time to stop being sentimental. Do you know the other day I came across a photo of one of my old music teachers? I can only just remember him now, thought at that time———' 'Do you mean the one in the trunk?' he could not help the urgency in his voice in his voice, and he seemed to surprise her. 'Why yes, I belive that's where it is - how did you know? Now he was———'[12]

Though Sarojini response makes Dandeka feels relieved that his wife not unfaithful to him, that Sarojini has lied about the photograph comes to light in the subsequent part of the narrative. On one occasion of her prayer to tulsi, he goes near the tulsi and notices that the figure in the photograph kept in the tulsi pedestal is similar to the figure in the photograph found in the trunk. This incident confirms his doubt that there is another man in his wife's life.

The last lie she tells regarding her frequent disappearance from home. Dandekar undergoes an unbearable agony and conflict between violent trust and extreme mistrust about the character of his wife. He decides to watch her movements personally without going

to his office. He pretends to go to office and waits for his wife to come out of the house the next day. When Sarojini leaves her house for the place of the god-man, he follows her without her notice. Then he returns home early and asks his wife to explain the reason for her coming home late. She replies that she has gone to the market to buy fruits. Indeed, it is a lie that she has not gone to the market.

One should not be misled to consider that Sarojini's telling lies is manifestation of moral or ethical offence. On the contrary, it should be viewed as an example of silence in the metaphorical sense. In order to drive this point home, let us find out the reasons for and the factors that have led her to tell lies. She is a representation of the typical Indian feminine woman who is bound to live according to the dictates of the patriarchal norms. Accordingly, she is expected to look after the household, child care, please and be faithful to her husband without a word of grievance. She is not free to formulate her own views on anything nor is she allowed to contradict with the views of her husband. She should live for others silently. In other words, she should be a *pativrata.*

Sarojini has lived subservient to Dandekar for fifteen long years. She has cooked fresh food for her husband in time every evening. She has maintained cleanliness in the house. She has washed his clothes. She has borne three children. She has never failed to fulfil his conjugal cravings. She has been faithful to him in thoughts and deeds. But she is forced to hide her faith in the power of spiritualism to heal her from the tumour when she learns that there is a tumour in her womb only because she knows that her husband would not allow her to follow her faith. It is so because he received modern education owing to which his belief is governed by science and reason. It is the fear that he would reject her views that is responsible to hide the truth that she goes and participates in the prayer of the god- man. Besides, she knows that her secret visits to the god-man have not

affected her fidelity to her husband in any sense. That is why she tells lies about the trunk key, the photograph of the god-man and her visits to the god-man.

The act of Sarojini's telling lies is the reflection of her helplessness and weaker position of hundreds and thousands of women in our society. She has never challenged the authority of her husband nor betrayed her husband. She has used the lies as a means of hiding her faith from her husband. Her telling lies is as good as silence because she has remained obedient, subservient and dependent still. Her lies have not projected and expressed her inner desire. Thus her lies are nothing silence in speech.

There is an occasion of Sarojini breaking her silence too. Yet she adheres to the norms of perfect *pativrata.* Let me elucidate this aspect now. When she informs her husband that she has gone to the market to buy fruits, Dandekar loses his patience and alleges that she has gone to her lover. He asserts that he has seen her going to the place of the god-man. When he accuses her of infidelity, she is not able to be silent as earlier and breaks her silence which is portrayed as given below:

> Mangoes,' he cried, shaking her furiously. 'So that's what you went out for. Not for anything else . . . - No. Oh no. Just for a little fruit like a dutiful housewife. Like a loving wife. Like a thrifty whore —a—-' 'For God's sake!' Her face was colourless, sick. Which god? - the god of love?' 'Yes, the children.' He stopped shouting and his voice was more deadly, killing in cold blood. 'Did you stop to think of them before starting your shamesless affair?' 'What affair?' She took her hands away from her face. He had never before seen it like this, naked and wet; she always covered her face when she wept. 'Your love affair with your music teacher.' She was staring at him: she had forgotten her lie. He said harshly. It doesn't do to lie so easily, does it? It's like lighting a fire under your

> own ——' 'Love affair, she burst out. *Love affair?*' 'Yes. I saw you with your lover today.' Suddenly all other feelings were swamped in anguish. ... 'So you watched me'. Yes. And if I had watched you sooner it would have been better for us, all of us, because a soiled woman is no good to anyone, not even to her children, do you understand that? No good, worthless——' 'You spied. What did you see? Did you see me lying naked with my lover? Did you? Did you?' He was stupefied. He started at, silenced. 'say you saw that too.' Her face was blotchy, discoloured. 'Why not, when you've said so much?'[12]

This is the first time Sarojini, the Indian Desdemona, has argued and spoken back to her husband. Yet she can not be viewed rebellious against her husband's hypocrisy like Nora in *The Doll's House*. She speaks aloud for the first time to prove her fidelity/chastity in the ordeal Dandekar has subjected her to. Subsequently, she reveals the fact she has got a tumour in her womb and has faith in the god-man's spiritual power for getting recovered from the infection of the tumour. Thus Markandaya presents the social reality of woman in Sarojini's silence that the freedom of expression or speech is denied to woman.

The end of the novel also testifies that woman is bound to be obedient to man through the character of Sarojini. Dandekar tries all ways and means to transport the god-man from the town so that his wife would come out of his influence and agree for the operation. He succeeds in his endeavour at the end with the help of the collector. When the god-man is removed from the town without the knowledge of Sarojini, she obeys to her husband's advice and undergoes the operation accordingly. This proves that woman has no power to disobey her husband.

However, the society bestows the right to speech and expression upon man which is highlighted in the

characterization of Dandekar. It should be noted that the right to speech is a patriarchal tool to oppress woman. Let me explain this factor as depicted the narrative in detail. The last paragraph of the first chapter serves a proof to the gender inequality in the freedom of speech as follows: "He began recounting the day's activities, a pursuit which him pleasure especially when, as now, his irreverent daughters were absent. Sarojini was unquestioning, and she was a good"[13] It shows the status of man and woman in the society. Where as man is endowed with the right to speak and question, woman is an object of his speech and question. Sarojini has been observing this norm ever since her marriage with Dandekar.

Dandekar expects his wife to be faithful to him by all means. It is with this obsession that he argues with Joseph that the Indian Hindu women constituted of intrinsic dignity and chastity. When he notices the changes in his wife's behaviour like disappearing from the house for sometime, reluctance to give the key of the trunk and telling lies regarding the photograph of the god-man, he feels disillusioned about his wife morality. The first thought that occurs in him is that she is consorting with some other man. The attitude of man to suspect the fidelity of his wife is man's prerogative in the male chauvinist society.

Yet unlike Sarojini, he exercises his right enquiry and speech. He interacts with his wife's cousin, Rajam, twice and gets his doubts about the meeting between her and his wife and about his wife's health. He follows his wife and discovers the place of the god-man. On learning from the god-man's assistant that he resides in his *asharam* in an village across a river and visits the town once in many weeks, he reaches the village on foot and by the boat and interacts with the god-man which is illustrated thus:

> On a marrow mat, his back against the wall, sat the Swamy; doing nothing as before, but very tranquil, even his hands were still. The stillness

> crept into Dandekar too. ...he waited without impatience, and presently the swamy said, so quietly as hardly to break the silence. 'You are in trouble?' 'Yes'. 'You yourself?' 'No. My wife.' 'You think I can help her?' 'Yes.' Dandekar drew a long breath, forced himself to think. 'She believes in you, she comes to you . . . you can stop her coming.' 'Why?' It was gently asked, the voice of a questioning elder dealing with a lovable if wayward child. Dandekar knew the answer; but now, with those quiet eyes on his, he found it extraordinarily difficult to speak. 'Because she is ill,' he stammered. 'She must go into hospital . . . have an operation, she must. . . .' His voice trailed away, and in the silence he felt another quation cristallising, almost as if the Swamy had spoken: in what way did the Swamy prevent Sarojini from entering hospital? 'I know you do'nt stop her.' He answered the unvoiced question, but if you weren't there——' . . . 'But if perhaps you— you refused to see her—she would have no option but hospital and ... 'If you wish your wife to be treated in hospital why do you not tell her so?' I have. She won't listen.' 'If you insisted?' 'She 'd go, I suppose.' He drew a long breath. 'But you can't force people, can you? At least one shouldn't.[14]

The above illustration reveals one more feature of male chauvinism. Dandekar, who argues that he should not force his wife to enter hospital for the operation, is a hypocrite indeed. While he creates the impression that he does not interfere in Sarojin's decision regarding the treatment for her tumour outwardly, he makes all possible attempts to prevent her from following her own faith secretly. It shows that Dandekar is double-faced. Though Dandekar knows that his wife would have agreed for the operation if he had insisted her, he concentrates his complete attention on getting the god-man removed from

the town because instead of insisting his wife for the operation because he is troubled by the mistrust on his wife that she is in liaison with the god-man rather than his concern for his wife's health.

When his appeal is not fulfilled by the god-man, his agony gets intensified. Yet there is a source for him to overcome form by sharing with his colleagues like Mahadevan, Nasrayan, Joseph and Sastri. Sastri is one who is identical to him in the outlook. He is always sympathetic towards Dandekar. He detects that Dandekar is troubled with the thoughts of his wife's character. To drive this point home, a dialogue between them is presented as shown under:

> 'Fact is, i'm a little worried about things at home.'
> 'The children'
> 'No. They are fine.'
> 'Sarojini?'
> 'No!

Sastri knew now what it was. Dandekar saw the knowledge in his eyes and cursed himself for the over-loud voice, the too-emphatic denial. He tried to retrieve the bulder. 'In a way it is sarojini. She—she doesn't seem able to run the house as well as she used to. I suppose women have their—their bad patches, same as we do, as you said.' 'Yes, yes of course.' 'It'll pass, of course—it's just a matter of a week or two.[15]

Sastri stands by Dandekar later also when he is worried about the treatment for his wife. He advises him to meet the Swamy before he takes the final decision about the treatment for his wife. He reminds subsequently that if he finds the Swamy to be a rogue, he should get her away from him by hook or by crook.

His boss, Chari, in the office is also tender towards him. He sanctions leave for when he is in need. Dandekar shares his difficulties with him. He explains to him that his wife is under the influence of the Swamy and he

would lose her if she is not released from him. He informs him that his life would become insignificant without her. Therefore he persuades him evacuate the Swamy from the town permanently. What is revealed from this analysis is that Dandekar is privileged with the freedom of speech and expression but Sarojini is deprived of the same.

Besides, Dandekar's concern and affection for wife, as reflected in giving her gifts on the last day of every month and struggle to rescue her from the tumour, are not genuine. On the contrary, it is man's way of keeping his wife under his control and reminding her indirectly that she should be faithful to him. In other words it is a sort of bribe to woman to make her adhere to the patriarchal norm that our whole society rests on the virtue of our women, they are the foundation.

However, the author has employed a fine stroke of irony which reveals explicitly there is gender inequality in this regard. Dandekar, who gets trouble by the thought that his wife meets someone secretly and expects his wife to be chaste for ever, fails to be faithful to his wife. On his way home from hospital, he comes across a pimp and fails to resist his desire for a woman. Consequently, he sleeps with a harlot thus:

> He knew it could not be contained; and at last he drew a long breath and said simply, 'Where'? He felt emptied, derelict, lying beside the woman. The moments of oblivion were done with. At any second now his mind would take over, the triumphing, imperious body once more under its control. I must try and remember how powerful it was, how irresistible, otherwise it will be unbearable. The withdrawal was mental now, as well as physical. The woman realised it and rose, standing with her back to him while she wound her cloth about her, twisted her long hair into the tight knot from which it had come loose.[16]

The climax of the narrative shows that woman is

subservient to weaker than man. Dandekar has succeeded in transporting the Swamy from his town. On finding that the Swamy has stopped coming to the town, Sarojini becomes helpless. At this juncture, Dandekar exerts pressure on her indirectly to enter hospital for the operation. The surgery is conducted successfully resulting in Sarojini's recovery from the tumour. Sarojini is ready to resume her routine household works, child care and entertaining her husband by silencing her own interests.

Conclusion

Kamala Markandaya belongs to the generation of pre-independence though her novels have the back ground of the post-independence period. She was born and brought up in the Hindu family which followed the traditions of the Hindu society. She has attempted successfully to depict the social life that she was witnessing during the recent post-independence time in her *A Silence of Desire*. Though the narrative highlights the impact of the colonial rule and western ideas on the people of Indian various forms, her triumph lies in her depiction of how woman has been confined to the dictates of the patriarchy. Though desires are natural both for man and woman equally, man enjoys the privilege of speech which woman can not claim in our society. Though she speaks, her speech should aim at pleasing man. Markandaya holds the mirror to the social reality of a vast body of Indian women that they live in silence suppressing their genuine desires.

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10

'Rejection of Man' in Taslima Nasrin's *French Lover*

P. Kannan

Introduction

Taslima Nasrin, who had received a degree in Medicine and worked a physician in a Government hospital in Bangaladesh, gave up that profession and became a writer with the ambition of fighting against the injustice meted out to woman socially, politically and religiously. She has been identified as controversial ever since her opposition to Islamic fundamentalism in her novel *Lajja* (*Shame*) which deals with the atrocity of the Muslims on the Hindus in Bangaladesh during the time of Pos-Babri Masjid demolition. She has used her writing as a medium of revolting against the inhuman practice in society in general and against enslavement of woman by the patriarchal systems in particular. Her *French Lover* is a novel in which she goes to the extent suggesting rejection of man altogether as a means of emancipation of woman from the subjugation in society. Hence the paper purports to analyze the novel with reference to the factors responsible for the woman-protagonist to reject the world of man.

***French Lover* - A Résumé**

The Plot of *French Lover* is woven around the life of Nilanjana, the protagonist, who seeks freedom from the subjugation of man after undergoing betrayal as lover, daughter and wife. She undergoes these transitions and a strong element of rebellion against the vicious patriarchal oppression. Her father is a doctor and mother is a housewife. She has got a brother and he is also a doctor. A boy called, Sushanta, has loved her but cheated her without marrying her after having made love to her. Her marriage with Kishanlal, a proprietor of two restaurants in Paris in France also becomes unfruitful.

When she joins her husband in Paris after her marriage, Nila realizes soon that her husband wants her for cooking food for him and gratifying his sexual urge. She is disappointed to detect that he is least bothered about her likes and dislikes in their lovemaking. He pays no attention to her desire to read, to visit the town and to work. Thus she feels frustrated with her husband and her marriage. As a result, she takes up a job in a packing company and leaves her husband. She stays with Danielle. During her stay with her, she discovers that she is a lesbian and resists her sexual assault in vain. Somehow she co-operates with her in the same sex activities without real involvement.

She returns home to visit her ailing mother. During her brief stay there, she takes her father to task for his indifference towards and negligence of her mother's health and for his extramarital relations with a woman in his office. Her mother dies after handing over a huge amount to her in the form of bank balance and thus she returns to Paris again. She meets and boy friend a French man, Benoir Dupont. He is a married man whose wife is employed elsewhere. He takes her to his house on reaching Paris and they make love there. Since she is not asked to stay there further, and can not return to her husband, she goes to the house of a Bengali doctor in Paris called

Sunil. It is he who had arranged the marriage between Kishanlal and her. Therefore she regards him as a brother. But he rapes her in his house by taking undue advantage of her helpless condition.

She takes a room for rent and later moves to a large house after she got her money from India. She entertains her French lover there. In the course of time, he stays with her permanently after having applied for divorce from his wife. In the meanwhile, she becomes pregnant and realizes that there is hypocrisy in the love of her French lover. She regards love and marriage is the form of the patriarchy to oppress womankind. Therefore, she gets her pregnancy aborted amidst the protests of her French lover. She has spent all her money and sets out to live the rest of her life among the poor migrants living in Paris.

Rejection of Man in *French Lover* – An Analysis

The feminist tendency of rejecting man is observed in the narrative of *French Lover* in the episodes of Nila and her friend Danielle. The first reason for Nilanjan to reject man is that she is deceived by Sushanta in the name of love. Sushanta and Nila were studying in the same institute and happen to fall for each other subsequently. He seduces her by the false promise that he would marry her and fails to fulfill his promise later since she does not belong to his caste. She feels frustrated with his deception so deeply that she has to leave Calcutta in order to forget him. Her pain due to her lover's betrayal is revealed vividly in the narrative thus: "But Calcutta had been tormenting her and if she hadn't left that city, she would have surely died. Yet she could have left it without getting married. She could have gone to Delhi, Mumbai or somewhere far away, where the sound or the smell of Sushanta's name wouldn't even touch her."(*FL*,08) Though she marries an Indian restaurant businessman in Paris and goes there leaving her home town in order to forget Sushanta, she is haunted by the memories of her

love with him in one way or the other throughout her life. She remembers him to compare with her husband in his failure to come to the air port to receive her. When she arrives at the Paris airport, the airport official for some enquiries retains her. She undergoes humiliation when they look down upon her on account of her Indian origin. Her husband has not come to the airport, when she is held up there unnecessarily. She feels that if he had arrived there, she would not have suffered that sort of humiliation.

It is observed that she remembers how Sushanta used to arrive earlier to her and wait for her whenever they had planned to meet somewhere. An illustration to the effect of the above is served in the following words thus: "Nila wasn't used to sitting or standing in one place for so long. She hadn't even waited so long for Sushanta, ever. Whenever they had to meet somewhere, Sushanta would be there first. Her head was spinning faster. It wasn't just the spinning—she felt as if a heavey burden, Sushanta himself—was suddenly placed on her head again."(*FL*, 08) Though this instance implies that Nila feels that Sushanta is better than her husband, there is no change in her hatred towards Sushanta.

She is reminded of Sushanta by her husband when she enquires about his first marriage. Kishanlal is already a married person. He has married a French woman called Immanuelle and divorced her subsequently. When he marries Nila again, she has not been informed about his first marriage. However, she happens to learn it accidentally from Mojammel, a worker in Kishanlal's restaurant in Paris after she joined her husband in Paris. She becomes shocked to know this secret. Subsequently, when she enquires him about it, he justifies his first marriage by stating that it was required for him to get the French citizenship for him. When she alleges that he has betrayed her by hiding it to her, he hurts her by reminding her of her love with Sushanta.

A little later, there is another instance, which reminds

her of her lover Sushanta. She feels fed up with remaining at home alone after her husband leaves for his business. So she decides to move outside the house into the town. She boards a bus and she witnesses a strange scene in the bus. She notices a couple kissing each other deeply in the bus in the presence of so many passengers without any hesitation. Since she has not come across such instances in her native town, Calcultta, the behaviour of the couple in the bus appears to be strange for her. Besides, it also reminds her of the difficulties she and Sushanta have faced whenever they wanted to exchange kisses. Her recollection is presented in the narrative thus:

> A couple got into the bus, with a child in a pram. The baby slept while the young couple kissed in front of the busload of people. An intimate kiss, it was a French kiss. Nila's ears burned but she noticed that no one else in the bus was glancing at the kissing couple. In Calcutta they would have been promptly pushed out of the bus for indecent behaviour. Nila felt that this kiss, simply because they wanted it and didn't want to keep it for the bedroom or a secluded spot, was the most decent and beautiful thing in the world. In Calcutta she had never been able to hold Sushanta's hand for fear of people's gaze. That same fear had driven them four miles out of Calcutta to a secluded place behind a shanty to steal the odd kiss or two. Nila and Sushanta had feared people the most. They hadn't minded the odd fox or two behind the woods, but it was people they had been terrified of.(*FL*,66-67)

Nila remembers Sushanta again after her experience of sexual intercourse with her French lover. She compares the way of her French lover's lovemaking with that of Sushanta. Since she is in ardent love with Benoir Dupont, she feels that his way of lovemaking is very special and different. She forms this attitude by comparing him with

Sushanta thus: "Nila thought of Sushanta. He had said he loved her, but never had he made love to her like this. Benoir had an artist within. Was he different from all the men in the world or did all Frenchmen love their women thus? Nila didn't know but she was drowning in love."(*FL*, 203) The love between Nila and Sushanta has been presented in the narrative in the mode of recollection. The reason for Sushanta to desert Nila after seducing her is that Nila belongs to scheduled caste. She has understood that Sushanta is not a reliable lover and hence accepts the proposal for marrying Kishanlal only with an intention to get rid of Sushanta and Calcutta.

The second reason for Nila to reject man is that she experiences disillusion with her husband, Kishan too. He owns two restaurants in Paris and marries Nila in Calcutta without informing her that his marriage with her is his second marriage. After the marriage, they stay together in Calcutta for two weeks and he leaves for Paris to be followed by Nila later. Accordingly, she joins her husband with a lot of dreams. She is a postgraduate in Bengali literature and thus aspires to read as many books as possible and to work without being idle at home. She has expected that her husband may pay attention to her likes and dislikes both in holding the house and conjugal love.

After a few days of stay with her husband, she realizes that he is least bothered about her desires. It begins with the disappointment of not getting tea at home. She is in the habit of drinking morning tea right from childhood. When she wants to drink tea in her first morning in her house in Paris, she undergoes disappointment, which is narrated thus:

> She draped a cotton sari around herself and went into the kitchen. A massive hunt didn't reveal where the tea was. So she stood at the bath room door and asked, "where do you keep the tea?' Kishan had come out of the shower and halfway through his shaving. He looked away from the

> mirror in surprise and said, 'Who'll drink tea? I don't drink it.' 'What! You don't drink tea?' Nila's eyes were tinged with scepticism. She had never come across a person in India who didn't drink tea. 'No'. Kishan turned back to the mirror and continued with his shaving. 'I can't do without tea; I need at least two cups in the morning.' Nila stood at the door and rubbed her sleepy eyes. 'Are you addicted to tea?' 'Not really addicted—habit, you could say.' 'Now that's a problem.'' Problem?' 'Two kinds of habits in the same house is definitely a problem'. As she moved away from the bath room, Nila heard Kishan say, 'I' m late.(*FL*, 23-24)

She undergoes disillusionment in the conjugal love as well. She has joined her husband with a hope that he would be a husband of concern towards her in considering her like and dislikes. He remains mechanical and indifferent in the matters of lovemaking also. He fails to understand her feelings at the time of their intercourse. It makes her feel that she is treated like an outcaste. Her feelings are presented in the following words thus:

> Nila looked at her own hands. She couldn't remember Kishan ever taking those hands in his. Perhaps their hands brushed accidentally. But Nila couldn't remember him ever looking at them with even the mildest appreciation or desire. When he got down to pleasuring himself with her body in the dark, she never felt Kishan's body cry out for each and every part of her body; at the most, only one part of his body panted for one part of hers. Nila's delicate fingers, shapely nails, large dark eyes and masses of black tresses lay untouched in the dark, as untouched as a low-caste untouchable.(*FL*, 26)

Nila feels that Kishan fails to treat her as a wife. When he insists her to do the household work like cooking,

washing etc, she feels that she is conducted like a housemaid. As she has never done such works in her house in Calcutta and lived comfortably with a maidservant to attend to her, she finds it difficult to adapt herself to household works in her husband's place and feels that she is ill-treated. The following is served as an illustration to this effect:

> 'At least take off those heavy shoes that you've been wearing all day.' ... 'Why don't you do it for me,' Kishan stretched out his legs. Nila sat at his feet and untied the shoelaces with her slim fingers and took off his socks. Now she felt like the housemaid, a little like Chitra who used to take everyone's shoes off, just as she was doing. 'There's a basket for unwashed clothes in the bathroom. Keep them there and do the washing tomorrow.' Nila took the dirty socks into the bathroom and thought that at night she'd have to be perfect whore and sell herself just as they sold their bodies for some money. Nila wondered if there was any difference between a prostitute's client and a husband. The only difference she could find was that the client can get away only after paying off the prostitute whereas the husband can get off the hook without ever paying his wife's dues. She felt the prostitute actually had more freedom than the wife in more ways than one. (*FL*, 28)

She feels boredom by being alone and idle at home after her husband leaves for his restaurants. Besides, she believes strongly that one should not depend on anybody and should earn money and be independent so that one can enjoy self-esteem. Thus she expresses to her husband. On hearing it, her husband feels flabbergasted and disapproves her idea. He reminds her that there is no dearth of money from his business and advises her to drop her interest to work. Nila argues with him stating

that he earns not for her. He feels offended by her argument and objects to her way of arguing with him. As there is a hot exchange of words in which Kishan warns her that she has no other choice than to depend on him. The instance of Kishan's discouraging Nila to work occurs in the narrative thus:

> 'You should have married a dumb girl who'd silently do the housework and never protest at anything, who doesn't have a soul to call her own and cannot read or write, who didn't have her wits about her and didn't dream a single dream.' Nila spoke slowly and succinctly. Kishan's voice rose by another octave as he shouted, 'Why are you so proud of your education? It's not as if you're a doctor or an engineer. What can you do with your degree in Bengali literature? You can't earn a single franc. You'll have to depend on me all your life—you have no other choice. So quit that ego. If you had any sense you'd see how pointless it is.'(*FL*, 56)

Nila observes that her husband denies her the freedom of cooking the food of her choice and inviting her friends to her house for dinner. Amidst her husband's objections, Nila is able to get a humble job of packing computers in boxes for the salary of fifteen hundred francs a week. On learning that she has taken up job of packing computers in boxes, her husband feels that he has lost his honour and prestige. However, their feud is resolved and they get along without much problem until she gives dinner to her friends Danielle and Catherine. On the day of the dinner, she cooks fish and meat for her friends in her house and entertains her friends with dinner. Her husband comes home late and loses his tolerance on noticing that his wife has cooked fish and meat in the house. He reacts to her in such a bad manner that she feels humiliated. The instance is narrated in the novel thus:

> Danielle and Catherine drank wine as they ate. Nila sipped at it occasionally. The feast wasn't over. Her guests were resting in between the courses. Danielle had smoked twice in the gaps and Catherine smoked her bidis. At this time Kishan arrived, to spoil the fun. Both Danielle and Catherine said bonjour. Kishan wished them and disappeared into the bedroom. 'Is this your husband?' Nila nodded, this was my husband. Ashen faced, Nila went into the bedroom and muttered, 'What will they think if you don't even talk to them?. 'Who are they?' 'They work with me. Please don't misbehave with them. Come on.' 'Why?' 'Can't you see, they are white and not black, brown or even yellow.' 'So? 'So come and eat. I have cooked many things today.' 'What have you cooked?' That's where Nila was in trouble. 'What have you cooked? Why do I smell meat?' 'They don't eat anything but fish and meat.' 'That's not my concern. You are not supposed to cook it in my house.' Nila stood with her head lowered in front of Kishan's indignant eyes. 'This is the last time. It won't happen again, I promise.' Nila pleaded. 'At least don't create a scene in front of the guests.' 'There's no need for you to cook anymore. Now go away, get out of my sight.'(*FL*, 77-78)

Nila feels disappointed with her husband's behaviour. She realizes that it is very difficult to get along with him. She finds an oppressor of woman in him, as he has never tired to consider her likes and dislikes in whatever happens in the family. She notices that he remains selfish regarding her food habits, her aspirations to move outside the house independently, to get employment, to entertain friends and even in sexual intercourse. She discovers the fact Kishan is a loveless person. At this juncture, Danielle suggests to her that she should leave her husband once for all and thus Nila exits from her husband.

Nila experiences disappointment in her relationship with Danielle also. She meets her in her work place. Danielle used to translate the instruction of Monsieur Gigout from French into English for Nila and thus they become friends. Their friendship grows deep day by day. When she gives dinner to Danielle and Catherine in her house, her husband causes humiliation to her through his ungentlemanly behaviour. Thus she leaves her husband and goes to stay with her in her room.

Danielle lives in one of the tenements in a five-storied building behind the Gare d' Austerlitz. It is a small room without bathroom. There is only a toilet at one end of the corridor. Since there is space for only one bed, Nila is not able to make a separate bed for her. Both Danielle and Nila go outside for dinner. After their return at night to the room, they sleep on the same bed. Danielle begins to fondle her after sometime. Nila considers it as act of endearment and feels comfortable to get sleep. She does not know that Danielle is a lesbian caressing her for same sex pleasure. When she learns that Danielle is attempting to seduce her, she resists but in vain. After that incidence, Nila gets used to share the same-sex love with Danielle. They continue to stay together until she is informed that her mother is suffering from serious ill-health. She returns to Calcutta to see her ailing mother. During her stay with her mother, Danielle visits her with irresistible passion for her. On the eve of her mother's death, Danielle drags her to her bed room and indulges in sex by force. On observing Nila's indifference towards Danielle, she returns to Paris. Nila feels frustrated with Danielle because of her lesbian attitude.

The third reason for Nila for rejecting man is that the French man whom she loves sincerely is proved to be a hypocrite. Nila has been suffering from the inferiority complex that no young white man will love her. On witnessing the white young man and woman hugging and kissing each other in the open place in Paris, she has longed for the sexual company of the some white

youth. Her passion for a young man is presented in the narrative thus: "Nila saw the young man kissing the woman and stroking her back lovingly. The two bodies were entwined. Nila wanted to be kissed like that; she wanted a handsome young man to love her, hug her and kiss her as deeply."(*FL*, 67)

When an Indian Physicist in Paris called Sanal is introduced and described that he is a womanizer, she desires for him. She makes some futile attempts of expressing her desire for him over phone. Her passion for him is stated in the novel thus: she wanted to talk to Sanal and no one else, the Sanal who was infamous for fooling around with other people's wives, pouncing on them and eloping with them—Nila *wanted* him to take her away from the house, somehow."(FL, 63-64)

When the state of her mind is like that, she happens to meet a handsome French man in the air-plane during her return to Paris. His name is Benoir. He is blonde, blue-eyed, pink lipped man of six feet three inches. They interact to each other and Nila and then fall for each other. In their interaction, Benoir shares the details of his life with Nila. He is married to a white woman named Pascale and has a daughter named Jacqueline. Pascale lives in Strassburg where she is employed in the office of the mayor. She joins her family on the holidays only. Benoir expresses that he had found his marriage with Pascale good during the initial days but the excitement did not last long. As a result, he has wanted something else for his excitement.

On landing in Paris, he takes her to his residence and they make love there. Since Nila and Danielle were staying together before her trip to Calcutta, she feels that she should join her again. When she reaches her room, she is asked to vacate that place as Danielle has allowed some other woman to stay in her room with her. Nila realizes that Danielle's love for her is superficial as she keeps on changing her companion.

As she knows nobody other than Sunil in Paris, she

goes to his house for her stay temporarily. She experiences a very bitter betrayal with him. In the meanwhile, Benoir and Nila meet and indulge in sex frequently. Nila experiences an extraordinary pleasure and satisfaction in his company. At times, she remembers Sushanta and Kishanlal and feels that Benoir gives her greater satisfaction than them. Yet she faces disillusionment when Benoir informs her that his passion for her is not love. Her disappointment is revealed in their conversation as follows:

> Benoir opened his eyes, kissed her lips lightly and said, 'I like you, I like you a lot.' Nila asked, 'Don't you love me? 'Not yet.' She sat up in bewilderment. 'What did you say? You *don't* love me? 'No.' Benoir was calm. 'If you don't love me, how could do all this like the devoted lover? How does your body get aroused at the sight of someone you don't love? Benoir said, 'I like you. Why wouldn't it arouse me?' 'I hate myself. Yuck!' Benoir sat up. What are you saying?' You thought she's from a poor country, she can hardly feed or clothe herself. I can easily take her into bed!' Benoir's forehead and eyes crinkled up. Nila dressed as quickly as she could. 'Are you a fool? How can you love someone so soon? May be I will, one day.' Benoir said.(*FL*, 186-87)

Nila is shocked to hear that Benoir does not love her although he and she have made love several times. It is an experience of disappointment for Nila, who believes that one does not make love without being in love. Thus she realizes that Benoir's intimacy with her has got nothing to do with love. She regards him just as a lusty rapist who enjoys the woman's body without genuine love. She feels ashamed of herself in such a way that she contemplates suicide.

Yet she is unable to give him up as she has been attached to him with very sincere love for him. Thus she

continues her love affair with him after she leaves the house of Sunil and taken a temporary shelter in a room in a studio hotel in *Rue de la Corvosion* at the cost of three hundred francs. She invites Benoir here and they continue their affair there. Then with the help of Danielle she hires a house and changes the interior according to the taste of Benoir. She buys new furniture and a computer. She provides all facilities in her house to amuse him. However, Benoir feels that she has paid more for those materials that they deserve. Both go out and spend extravagantly. Benoir takes her to his parents and they stay in their place for sometime.

With the passage of time, Nila and Benoir discuss and share so many things with each other. Though Benoir was inclined rather towards his wife Pascale and daughter Jaculine than towards Nila earlier, he has come out of it and has grown very fond of Nila now a days. He appeals to Nila to bear a son for him. When Nila enquires why he loves her though he has a wife and a daughter he replies and in his reply he announces his genuine love for her thus: Nila's voice broke. 'Why do you love me, Benoir? You have a wife, a child, and a happy family; what's the point ...' 'I thought I loved only Pascale. But something happened deep inside. You appeared in my life like a flash of lightening. Now I need you, I have no choice, I love you."(*FL*, 228)He further explains that his wife, Pascale, has heard him calling out Nila's name. Though it is difficult for her to accept her husband's affair with Nila, she has not articulated her displeasure to him. Benoir feels that he needs both Pascale and Nila. While he needs Pascale because she is the mother of his dear daughter, he wants Nila because he thinks that she is his unbridled passion and he is a dead soul without her.

Nila discerns that the relationship between them becomes complicated gradually. She realizes that when it is possible for Benoir to fall for her while he is still in deep love with his wife, it is possible for him to fall

for one more women also. Thus she doubts whether his love for her is real or otherwise. However, Nila is unable to come out of the spell Benoir has cast on her. She is ready to devote her entire life to love him irrespective of his love affair with any number of women. In other words, she is head over heels in love him. Thus she goes on yielding whatever he expects from her. She spends lavishly to keep him in perpetual enjoyment. When he informs her that his daughter is interested in a brother and asks her to bear a child for him, she readily allows him to sow the seed in her womb. Subsequently, when she attains pregnancy, they get it confirmed through DNA test that Benoir is the father of the fetus.

It is at this juncture it dawns upon her mind that she has been in the pursuit of illusion in her attitude towards Benoir. She understands that to be his lover is as good as self-usurpation. She realizes that his love for her is hypocritical. The sign of her such realization is observed in the description of her response to Benoir's urge to tell that she loves him thus:

> Benoir brought his mouth close to Nila's and said, 'Tell me you love me, tell me, tell me you love me a lot, insanely. Say jet t'aime a la folie, say a la folie. Say I am everything to you. Tell me you can't live without me, you won't ever love anyone else. Tell me, Nila, tell me.' Nila pulled away. Benoir's mouth smelt of dead rats. His mouth often smelt like that; Nila had never found it odious before. Or perhaps, Nila thought, she may even have liked the smell once. (*FL*, 284)

In the subsequent interaction between them, Nila informs him that she has exhausted her money because she has decided to shift her residence from this costly house to a moderate one and to take up a job. Benoir replies that he is ready to look after her without sending her for any job and thus invites her to go and stay with him in his house. He has resolved to send his wife,

Pascale to some other house on rent. When she refuses for this and tells him that he shall live in that house with Pascale, the argument begins between them in which she alleges that he loves neither her nor his wife thus:

Benoir jumped off the bed. 'What are you saying? Do you think I love Pascale more than I love you?' Nila said, 'No', not what I think.' 'So then you know just how madly, passionately I love you'. Nila's voice was strangely calm, 'No Benoir, you don't love me.' In swift motion Benoir pulled her up from her supine position, 'What the hell do you mean?' Nila took his hand off her arm and said, 'I know what I am saying.' 'So you are still jealous; you can't take it if I speak to Pascale for a few minutes. You think I love her still.' Nila fixed her deep, black eyes onto his and said, 'Benoir, you don't love Pascale.' Benoir's eyes, his eyelashes trembled, 'So who do I love?' 'You love yourself, Benoir, your own self. No one else'. 'Don't be a moron,' Benoir shouted. Nila laughed, 'Does the truth hurt?(*FL*, 285-86)

Then she reminds him that he is an example of the whole cult of patriarchy whose love and sympathy for woman are basically hypocritical. Irrespective of their role, there is always a vested interest among men to express their sympathy for women. She has gained this wisdom through her exposure to deceptive nature of men in her life and reveals this to Benoir thus:

> I have realized one thing by now; you are no different from my father Anirban, my lover Sushanta, my husband Kishanlal and that Sunil. Of course, you appear to be different from them, you speak sweet words of love, kiss me every now and then, you say "ladies first" and make way for them or hand them a flower or two, help in the kitchen, push the pram on the road; but deep inside, all of you have some things in common'.(*FL*, 286)

Benoir solicits her to reconsider her decision and

accept him, In this regard, he informs her that he is ready to divorce his wife the next day and marry her at once after the divorce. When she replies that she is willing to marry him, he reminds her that she is carrying his fetus as a sort of blackmail. She has got a readymade answer to him and states that she is going to abort her pregnancy. He tries his best to plead her for the re-examination of her resolution but Nila turns a deaf ear to him. He feels frustrated and begins to abuse her thus:

> You had fun at my expense. You have fooled me. You are greedy, selfish, horrid, lowly, rotten woman. You speak of Pascale, but you cannot even hope to measure up to her. You are a big zero, a vacuous being. I have seen many people but, never one like you. You have sucked me dry, burnt me alive, ruined me, and ruined my family. I was such an ass that I loved a lousy woman like you. You are worse than the worst of them. I shudder to even look at you. You are ugly, dirty and revolting. Loving you was the biggest sin I ever committed. I hate myself for it. You are a murderer; you are about to kill an innocent child. I have laid eyes on a murderer like you..' Benoir spat at Nila. (*FL*, 289)

Benoir has betrayed himself by abusing Nila like this because it reveals clearly that his love for her has been superficial. It is only a little while ago, he was glorifying her in persuading her to marry him. He eulogized her thus:

> 'You are mine, only mine. You cannot leave me. I have given you my all, all the love I had to give. I have loved you and known the meaning of true love, true emotion. I have never loved anyone so deeply; please don't hurt me. You are getting me wrong. You don't understand that if you leave me, my life loses all meaning. I'll kill myself. I have seen so many women, but none

> like you. No one is as good, as honest, generous, loving, patient and selfless as you. You are the greatest woman on the earth; nobody can be like you. You are incomparable. You don't know just how great, how noble you are; I know it. You have brought light into my mundane, modest life and I cannot bear to lose you. I have love and it is all for you, no one else. Keep me at your feet, but don't leave me.(*FL*, 287)

When one observes Benoir's behaviour in praising Nila while pleading for her love and in abusing her on her rejection of his pleading, it becomes clear that he has not been earnest and honest in his love for Nila. His act of reaching her to *Gare du Nord* on her return to Paris from Calcutta after the death of her mother, taking her to various places in Paris, helping her to find a house on rent, making love to her without condom, taking her to the doctor, cooking food for her, offering security, taking her to her parents, considering a divorce to his wife and to marry her is a drama to seduce Nila. He has never sought a lover in her but one woman for his sexual gratification. Nila realizes that he is an exploiter of woman.

She becomes conscious of the fact that men look at women as an object of sex and in order to enjoy women, they pretend to be fond of them. She wants to get rid of men altogether after this realization. Thus, she informs Benoir to collect his belongings and leave her house at once and once for all. He feels offended by her act and tries to kill her in anger, which causes some damages to her furniture and her physique. She endures them all and sees to it that he is set out of her and her life once for all.

The fourth reason for her to reject man is that Sunil whom she regards as her own brother violates her person. It is depicted in the narrative vividly. She becomes so helpless that she has no place to go for her shelter. Since

she has given up her husband, she feels that she should not go to his house. Since her French lover has invited her to stay in his place, she feels that she should not go to his house also. Then she decides that Sunil's house is the only resort for her and hence she goes to his house. Chitali receives her with reluctance. She stays in his house for a few days during when Dupont continues his flirting with her. Sunil also proves to be deceiver of Nila. Sunil is the matchmaker in the marriage of Nila with Kishanlal. He is a prosperous doctor in Paris and his wife is also employed in Paris. Sunil goes to the airport along with Kishanal to receive Nila when she arrives at Paris from Calcutta. She contacts him whenever she needs any help. It is through him she learns about her mother's health problem. Indeed, Nila treats him like a brother.

But she undergoes disillusionment with him too. When she returns to Paris from Calcutta after the death of her mother, her condition becomes like that of an orphan. Her French lover enjoys sexual intercourse with her in his residence but fails to ask her to stay in his house. She is unable to return to the house of her husband as she has renounced him. She cannot return to the house of her parents in Calcutta as she would not be accepted on the ground that she has left her husband. She fears that she would be treated as a fallen woman. Under such a circumstance of crisis, she feels that Sunil is a reliable person to stay with and thus she goes to him.During her stay in his house, he serves her a cup of hot tea on one day. When she drinks it, she happens to spill it on her lap and on her book. At this juncture, he seduces her by taking advantage of her being alone there. It is presented in the narrative thus:

> 'Let me see how much you've burnt it, show me your tongue ...' The next moment Sunil's long, red tongue advanced on Nila's scalded one. She pulled her tongue back in, leaned her chair back and removed herself from his reach 'What are you doing!' Nila pushed him away and stood up. Sunil

> pulled her down on the bed in one swift movement. The tea cup and Joy's book dropped heavily. Sunil jammed her body down with his own; with one hand he untied her salwar and pulled it down. He unzipped his pants and pulled them down too and pushed himself into her. Speechless, powerless, Nila lay there watching this ugly scene. There were no sounds in the house except Sunil moaning, 'Oh Nila, oh Nila.' In a few moments Sunil was limp. Nila didn't even touch him to push him away. She stared at the blank wall fixedly. Sunil quickly dressed and then noticed the tears rolling down and wetting her pillow.(*FL*, 199)

Sunil's conduct affects her very deeply. Her eyes shed tears without her consciousness. When Sunil enquires her whether she is weeping, she expresses the impact of his behaviour with her as follows:

> 'Are you crying?' Sunil wiped her tears and said, 'Why are you crying?' She stared at the wall and spoke hoarsely, 'I am not crying, I don't cry. My mother left me all alone and I didn't cry. I don't break down under any kind of pressure. Life is so ugly. I ... feel my brother, Nikhil, has just raped me. 'I am not your brother. I am his friend.' 'We are taught to think of our brother's friends as brothers. 'But sometimes one also gets married to them, isn't it?' 'True. But I haven't married you. I left Kishan because we were not compatible. I never felt close to him. In this city you were the only one who I thought was near to me, Perhaps it's better for me to go back to him rather than take this kind of humiliation. Even if he ravishes me, at least he is my husband, not brother.(*FL*, 200-201)

It is an irony that Sunil tries to justify his act. He states that when she was reading Joy's poetry, he was given indications by her gaze that she was interested in

sex with him. She ignores his justification and bathes herself for very long time to clean herself from his inhuman assault on her. Sunil has not realized that it was wrong to seduce Nila. It is proved in the repetition of a similar act again. It seems that there is a feud between him and his wife because of which he has not been able to make love to her for many days. Overwhelmed with sensuous feelings, he assaults her sexually again in her house when she is in a trance. He violates her person, when she is found lying in half-conscious state remembering her Calcutta lover, Sushanta. It is depicted in the novel thus:

> Nila was in a trance, in Malabar, and the room was bathed in a dim glow. Sushanta, bathed and clean-smelling like an Epicurean husband, reached for her aroused nipples. Drowning in languorous pleasure, Nila acquiesced to their lovemaking. Sushanta lay spent and tired after an orgasm. The clouds parted and Nila's illusion shattered; the piercing eyes of the wolf tore her to bits. She shivered, cold. Nila screamed. It was Sunil in front of her eyes.(*FL*, 248)

Sunil has raped Nila again. She reveals it to her French lover, Benoir a little later when he comes to take her out. She also feels that she is also responsible for it. She has unconsciously allowed him to do so as she was in the state of trance. She has thought that it was a dream of the intercourse between Sushanta and her and thus she has failed to detect that it was Sunil who was making love to her. Nila feels that Sunil's betrayal is the worst and most unethical. His deception affects her mind so deeply that she begins to think that men are unreliable.

The fifth reason for Nila to reject man is that her father inflicts gender violence upon her mother. Her father, Anirban Mandal is a doctor and her mother, Molina, is a housewife. Her father behaves like a master to his wife by treating her as a slave. Molina has to do all household works without any complaints. Yet Anirban has never

uttered a word of compliment to her as recognition for her hard work. Nila recollects how obediently and devotedly her mother used to serve food to her father thus: "Molina left her bed at dawn and went into the kitchen. She made hot chapattis, or fried daalpuris or whatever Anirban liked to eat. Molina could never be faulted in the art of homemaking."(*FL*, 12)

Anirban has been very indifferent towards his wife without any attempt either to know her likes or to fulfill any of her likes. She is a very humble woman without demanding anything from her husband. When Molina is on her death bed, Nila arrives there to see her mother. She is shocked to discover that though her father and brother are efficient doctors in the town, they have not done anything useful to save her mother who has been suffering from cancer. When Nila overhears the talk among the visitors that since Molina is not going to survive, her wish, if any, should be fulfilled, she remembers how her mother's some basic wishes were turned down by her father. She recollects it sadly thus:

> Nila wanted silence. She didn't want anyone to describe Molina's condition or wishes in great detail. Nila knew about Molina's wishes from her childhood—none of them had ever been fulfilled. Molina had wanted a little love from Anirban; she didn't get it. It's not that Anirban Mandal didn't love anyone, he did. But not Molina. ... Once Molina had seen a Kanjivaram sari and exclaimed, 'What a lovely sari. I wish I could wear one.' Anirban didn't buy it for her. ... Molina had always wanted to go to Darjeeling. But Anirban never had the time to take her there... That was Molina's life. She had spent her years in this household by keeping her wishes collared and chained.(*FL*, 133)

Besides, Anirban has deprived her of the conjugal love. The author highlights it as follows: For as long as

she could remember, Nila had never seen Anirban and Molina share a bed. Molina always made her husband's bed with great care. He came back from hours of fun with Swati, critiqued every item that was put on the table, crashed on his neatly made bed and snored the night away."(*FL*,13)

There are two reasons for it. Firstly, Molina is not so much fair in complexion as he desires. Secondly, he has been in the pursuit of extramarital relations with his colleague called Swati. He loves her so much that he has bought her a Kanchivaram saree and taken her to Darjeeling. The author has explained in her columns that " The scriptures gave men the right to tame and enjoy women in any way they desired. The unrestricted rights of men to possess many wives, mistress and courtesans are stressed repeatedly."(*SC*,25) The character of Anirban exemplifies the above.

Nasrin is not content with her exposing the male-chauvinism of Anirban's extramarital affair. She moves a step ahead to condemn it by way Nila's reaction against her father. When Nila arrives at her house in Calcutta from Paris to see her ailing mother, Anirban calls her to his room and enquires her about her with regard to her separation from her husband Kishanlal. He advises her to make amends for her bad behaviour with her husband so that he could make arrangements for their reunion. He also blames that she has spoiled the life of Kishanlal who, according to him, is a straightforward man. He adds that he is too worried to sleep on account of her behaviour.

Nila lets her anger loose on hearing her father's words. She questions him as whether he has ever wept for any one or for his own self. When he feels flabbergasted at her questions, she reminds him of his wickedness and deception of his wife thus:

> There's a word—regret. Have you ever heard? Have you ever felt it? No. You haven't. There was never any need. You married Ma because you

> needed money. That was taken care of by her dowry. You used it to study medicines. Ma was like a servant in this house, right? No one anything because that's how women often are in their husbands' house. You've enjoyed lording it over her. And you had Swati Sen to give you other pleasures. People didn't care about that either because men are supposed to have a liaison or two, there's nothing wrong in it.(*FL*, 138)

She goes on reminding him of his irresponsible and negligent attitude towards the family including her well being. He has sired two children in order to make society believe that he is fond of his wife and he is sterile. They have come up well in the studies without his efforts and expenditure. He has got Nila married off to Kishanlal without giving much dowry but has gained the credit that his daughter is in Paris. She speaks with her father like this without giving any chance for him to respond. Later, she meets him and alleges that he has failed in his duty as husband. She insists on him that he should regret for the lapse in his responsibility. The elements of patriarchal oppression are evinced in her words, which read thus:

> 'You should because you never paid attention to Ma's health. For ten years Ma was bleeding from time to time and you said it was piles, didn't you? Now you know it wasn't that. When she had stomach aches, you said it's nothing, she was just acting up. Actually she wanted to just take the day off, isn't that what you said? You said she was complaining unnecessarily to get your attention. Now you know the truth. Don't you have regrets? When you sit here alone, don't you ever feel sorry, feel that you could have prevented this disease if you had treated her instead of ignoring it. You are a professor of gastroenterology, and still are. Don't you feel sorry that although

> you are a doctor and Ma relied on you, she's dying without treatment because you never spared her a second glance. You do regret, right?'(*FL*, 144)

Her father tries to defend himself by stating that her mother has been under treatment. He also adds that they have tried chemotherapy too. On hearing it she loses her temper and shouts at him remarking that chemotherapy is not a treatment for the cancer at all. She alleges that his resorting to chemotherapy is to fool people that his wife is being given treatment. When he tries to argue that he has been trying to take care of through various treatments, she takes him to task thus: I sent a oncologist today as well.' 'That's mere pretence, to show people that you're getting her treated by great doctors.' Anirban looked at Nikhil for support. 'What is this girl blabbering! He is the finest oncologist in the city ...' 'Fuck your oncologist.' 'What?' 'Fuck yourself.'" (*FL*, 144) Nila performs her role not only as a daughter but also as a rebel against the male oppression over female in quarreling with her father. She does not feet shy to use vulgar words to remind him of his hypocrisy. She pines that the status of a dog in the foreign country is better that of her mother.

The author has incorporated the feature of rebellion against gender prejudice in the role of her mother also. She had inherited a large sum of money from the property of her parents as her share. She did not reveal it either to her husband and or son. She has preserved it in the form of bank bonds worth rupees twenty lakhs for the sake of her daughter. When she feels that she is not going to live long, she calls her daughter and hands it over to her reminding her that she should not share it with anybody. After her demise, Anirban makes a hue and cry that Nila is not entitled for his wife's money and insists Nila to share it with her brother. Nila refuses to do so stating that it is her mother's share from her parents and thus it is her mother's prerogative to give it to anybody of her choice.

One must understand that the author exposes the social reality that the husbands inflict oppression on wives and defies such practice in the episodes Anirban-Molina-Nila. She shows the hypocrisy of man in Anirban's behaviour of marrying Molina only for the sake of dowry and of pursuing extramarital affairs with Swati Sen and of being indifferent towards his wife while she is struggling between life and death in suffering from cancer. Through Nila's interaction with her father, men are warned against their injustice towards their wives and thus it confirms that there is a rebellion against the gender prejudice in the episodes of Anirban and Molina.

She has faced the hardships in the form of gender prejudice for many years right from Calcutta to Paris. She has made efforts to defeat these prejudices but ended up unsuccessful. By way of getting rid of Benoir and Paris, she exhibits her rebellion against them and thus she states that "she was happy to have achieved it finally".(*FL*, 292) The theme of rebellion against male by way of rejecting men is expressed very strongly in the episodes of Danielle. Her father betrayed her by raping her while she was five years. She developed contempt for men due to this experience. She turned her affection towards persons of her own sex. She had homosexual relationship with her school teacher in the beginning. She lived with two other women in the communion after she completed her schools. She makes Nila also her homosexual partner. She argues that rejection of sex with man is the only way to defeat patriarchy.

Nasrin's feminist tendency is expressed in the episodes of Danielle also. She is a feminist and hates man to the core. She is a hybrid as her father is a Canadian and mother an Irish. She has come to Paris and lives on the resources from some odd jobs. While she works in the parcel company, she becomes friend of Nila. Her hatred for man is founded on a very bitter experience in her child hood. She had undergone a sexual assault by her father when she was only six years old. She narrates

> When I was six years old, my father raped me. Eight years ago, when I was sitting in Montreal, it came back to me one day suddenly as I was watching a snowstorm. Nila sat up, stunned. Her eyes were full of disbelief.' 'Did it really happen or was it someone else's story that you suddenly imagined had happened in your life?' She shook Danielle's shoulders. 'It happened. I remember very clearly. Mother had gone out on an errand and I was alone at home playing with my dog. Father picked me up and put me down on the bed and raped me. He stuffed his shirt into my mouth to stop my screams.' 'Your own father?' 'My own father.'(*FL*, 105)

This experience has caused a serious impact on Danielle's mind resulting in eternal hatred for man. She shows her rejection of man in the act of same sex. It must be noted that Danielle is beautiful and graceful woman. Her personality is presented through the observation of Nila on one day thus: "She watched Danielle's body as she lay there and thought it was a living sculpture by Rodin. It was a body that could drive any man insane. But Danielle had never let a man touch her and never would. She claimed the male body was ugly and didn't excite her. The female body did. Nila's body did."(*FL*, 100-06)

As she is young and beautiful, many men come forward to love her. But she has never entertained a single man to touch her so far. On the contrary, she approves homosexuality and has been pursuing same sex relationship with her friends. It should be viewed as her way of defying and rejecting men. She reveals her homosexuality with her school teacher, Joselyn to Nila. Danielle was twelve years when she fell in love with her schoolteacher. She was married and had three children at that time. Even then Danielle was not able to control her love for her and thus she used to stare at the face

of her teacher affectionately without being able to express her love for her.

Danielle had the habit of going to Joselyn's house and peeping inside to stare at her. Joselyn detected her peeping on one day and invited her into her house. There was none in the house on that day and thus they could exchange their love for each other' it is depicted thus: "One day Joselyn spotted the two eager eyes at the window. That day there was no one else in the house. She called Danielle into the house. When Joselyn touched her and kissed her, she trembled. When Joselyn took her clothes off and undressed Danielle, she trembled. ... Then Danielle didn't remember the details. But she remembered rolling on Joselyn's bed in the grip of a tremendous ecstasy."(*FL*, 104)

However the relationship between Danielle and Joselyn ended as soon as she had completed her studies in that school. When she became fourteen years, she left home and lived in a commune. She was living among seven persons out of whom five were women and two were men. In the commune, she felt inclined to women only and never felt attracted towards men at all. Thus she had developed sexual relations with two of the five women there. Besides, she used to visit gay bars and select the one she liked for enjoyment. Then there were four instances of her lesbian relationship with women. She had stayed with them and their friendship was broken. In the absence of a permanent partner, she adjusted with her visits to the gay bar. What is important to note is that she has never allowed any man to touch her. She prefers homosexuality to heterosexuality as her reaction against the attitude of patriarch towards woman that "the moral ranking of a woman depended on the pleasures she gave a man"(*SC*, 25)

It is because of her anti-man tendency, she advises Nila to get rid of her husband who is least bothered about her likes and dislikes. She tries to persuade her that woman can live without the company of man. She makes

her the partner of her homosexuality by force in a way. There is an argument between them in this regard, While Danielle asserts that all men are one and the same in their attitude towards woman; Nila states that she believes that there may be some good men also. While Danielle rejects heterosexuality by viewing it as a trap of man to enslave woman, Nila insists that it is natural and is necessary for the evolution of mankind. Finally, Danielle concludes that "for sex, the day women say they don't need men, will be the day men finally lose. Not before that'.(FL, 118) The author has shown her deep sense of revolt against men by rejecting the world of man in the episodes of Danielle. She has exposed the shameful behaviour of child sex abuse in narrating that Danielle's father has raped her when she was six years old only. She suggests that her rebellion against male chauvinism can become fruitful only in the rejection of male in sexuality. It is an example of the school of feminism called Lesbian Feminists.

Conclusion

Taslima Nasrin, who has undergone the bitter reality that woman is considered equivalent to man at any stage of her life, has taken the cudgel against the oppressive male chauvinism through the narrative of *French Lover*. She evinces that man as father, friend, lover, husband is a misogynist. As a parent, father prefers son to daughter and deprives the daughter of her share in his wealth. She exposes the shameless act of fathers abusing their daughters sexually in the episodes of Danielle. As a friend, lover and husband, man looks at his woman counter-part as an object of sexual gratification. He fails to understand and respect her likes and dislikes. Nasrin highlights that man as a friend and lover is untrustworthy in the episode of Sunil's misconduct with Nila, and in the love story of Sushanta-Nila and Benoir Dupont-Nila. She also points out that man as husband is also a betrayer in the episodes of her parents and her marriage with Kishanlal. She feels

that woman should become aware that her role is indispensible in the man-woman relationship in the society. She is of the opinion that man will face extinction with the company of woman. Since man has caused injustice to woman from immemorial, she feels that man must be punished. As she realizes that man is capable of gaining power over woman and subjugate woman in any punishment other than rejection of man, she advocates the rejection of man as the only means of emancipation of woman in *French Lover*.

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11

Revolutionary Romances: Romantic Love in Gloria Naylor's *Linden Hills*

M. H. Rudra Muni

Sherley Ann Williams' review of Gloria Naylor's *Linden Hills* makes the claim that "though *Linden Hills* has many compelling moments, the 'sins' of this community—hypocrisy, loveless marriages, and marital infidelities, idleness-seem too trivial to carry the weight of Naylor's expert literary attentions" (69). In fact, these "sins" are more than trivial. The scattered narrative takes the history of Nedeed family couplings as its catalyst. Although the history of Luther Nedeed's family and Linden Hills becomes a sidebar for future generations, it refuses to be invisible. The combination of this past and the many loveless relationships that follow underscores the failures in the community to embrace love in any form.

Linden Hills chronicles the lives of affluent African Americans whose community epitomizes material success leads them only to death and damnation, in fact material wealth is an empty space that will consume either black or white people; African Americans who succeed in it are alienated from community and self, instead of finding

happiness. Though many individual stories are relayed through the course of the novel, two young men become the narrative thread that ties them all together. Luther Nedeed is corrupted by the financial success. The economic power that his family has carried for generations now controls him, just as he controls the inhabitants of Linden Hills. His humanity is consumed by his desire for material wealth and power. Luther contributes to the unnaturalness that pervades this community, where Wilson says "family relationships are stilted and forced. Neighborliness is borne out of obligation, not altruism. And marital relationships are founded on assets, not love or passion" (77). In the end, Luther Nedeed becomes a man who can kill his own son, and he, his wife, and his dead son finish their existence in a burning house on a frozen lake. He is the epitome of "civility and gentility," yet he also epitomizes "unprecedented barbarity" (Wilson 80).

Naylor begins the novel with an introduction to the community that acquaints readers with questions about the location of Linden Hills and with Luther Nedeed's "double great-grandfather," who bought the land (1-2). Luther Nedeed reproduces himself generation after generation. Each son is "short, squat, dark, and with an immobile face, even from birth. He grew up to carry his father's first name, broad chest, and bowlegs" (4). Each generation assumes the helm of the undertaking business started by the first. Luther Nedeed brings an octoroon woman into his home, and produces only one son. The marriages between Nedeed men and pale octoroon women are not conceived in love. The Nedeed wives are completely subordinated to their dark-skinned husbands; each is known only as "Mrs. Nedeed". Their sons are alienated from their by their husbands, who remain blind to the mother/producer's role and claim their sons as their own, as Nedeeds, as incarnations of essential blackness. Indeed, the original Luther Nedeed reputedly sold his octoroon wife and six children to get the money to move the North and buy the land for Linden Hills.

Later, he takes on another octoroon bride, whom he buys out of slavery, but as we later learn, he never manumits her and in fact keeps her as his own, legal slave. Willie Mason and Lester Tilson became Naylor's narrative thread that ties together the disjointed stories. Their perspective reflects a sensitivity that the community desperately needs. However, their "journey down Linden Hills" in the five days before Christmas cuts a path from the past to the present. They uncover the profound emptiness in the absence of love.

Nedeed himself marries not an octoroon woman but rather a darker-skinned woman, whom he nevertheless treats just as tyrannically as his fathers treated their pale wives. His wife, however, gives him a son who looks just him, but it turns out to be white, "a ghostly presence that mocks everything his fathers had built." Nedeed considers the child a bastard, and to punish his wife he locks her and the six-year-old boy in the morgue-basement of their home; the son dies, as Nedeed had hoped. Willa Prescott Needed has been making her own journey through time as she discovers the name and history of the Nedeed women. There is a tale of progressive depersonalization, despair and madness for each wife, as each husband became in turn more cruel and evil than his father. Willa suffers in this circle because she has betrayed herself by willingly submerging her own identity in her husband's. She becomes his faceless tool and allows him to starve their son to death without really putting up a fight.

Early in the novel, Willie and Lester encounter Ruth and Norman Anderson in the street and are invited into their humble house. Ruth chooses poverty and love over affluence 'and lives in Putney Wayne with her second husband, who gets "the pinks" every other spring when he loses his mind, tears up their house, and spends all their saving on medical bills. Though "no one would ever believe that she was still there because of some aspirin and a glass of water," their sacrifices for each other outweigh the drive to make it in Linden Hills (37). And

yet, their genuine love for each other does not ignore that legacy. It is Ruth who suggests to Willie and Lester to earn Christmas money by doing odd jobs for the residents of Linden Hills. This suggestion juxtaposes the love in their home with the lack of love the young man will reveal on their journey. Norman claims that "love rules in this house," and Ruth agrees (38). Ruth lived in Linden Hills with her first husband; she comments to Norman that she will never return to Linden Hills: "You know, wherever you go, I'm game-Spring Vale, Park Heights, even out of state. But I'm never going back down there again. I've had that life, Norm, and I lasted six months. Those folk just aren't real" (39). Ruth has repudiated material success in favor of love, and so she is the real success in this novel. She epitomizes the ultimate in human love. To Willie she is a dream and a source of inspiration. She is a symbol of the fullest expression of human love. Willie and Lester find lovelessness and disconnection in the rest of the community, but begin in a place where love rules. While Ruth and Norman cannot leave each other even when they think they want to, each Nedeed wife is a version of the first octoroon woman who reproduced her husband in the form of her son. The novel as a whole, then, is a portrait of contradiction and failure.

Xavier Donnell exemplifies the contradictions in Linden Hills regarding the place for romantic love. He feels genuine affection for Roxanne, Lester's sister, but his ambitions in the business world impede his expression of it. He acknowledges her as an African American, "the road was a lot more cluttered for a black woman and a successful journey meant sharpening her spirits to grind away all garbage that stood in her way. And just maybe when that switch was turned on, it couldn't tell the difference between his living flesh and anything else" (11). Xavier is discouraged from pursuing his love by his colleague Maxwell Smyth, who believes that romantic love is a luxury that the ambitious cannot afford. Xavier

worries about whether she would be a "wise" choice as a wife. When he asks Maxwell's opinion about marrying Roxanne, Maxwell advices against it because Roxanne's family "has one foot in the ghetto and the other on a watermelon rind" (116). Loving Roxanne means that he cannot completely disengage, as Maxwell has.

Willie and Lester spend a full day of work as busboys at the wedding of Winston Alcott. Winston has been persuaded to end an eight-year relationship with his lover David because rumors of Winston's homosexuality threaten his legal career. As a reward to Winston for entering a doomed marriage, Luther Nedeed grants him a lease on the exclusive Tupelo Drive area. David recites and parodies a Whitman poem as a means of announcing to Winston that their love affair will end if he goes through with the marriage. David's and Winston's punishment is a lifelong separation. David suffers in this circle because he loves a man who is unworthy of him. Both are miserable. Like the Nedeed men, Winston has married for convenience, not love; thus his home, a descent into lower hell, will be as spiritually barren as Luther Nedeed's.

Willie's and Lester's next task takes them to the home of Chester Parker, who is entertaining mourners the night before the funeral of his wife Lycentia. Here we find greedy indulgence of all kinds. The house is crowded with guests who keep the twelve chairs around Chester's dining room table filled. The scene is a depraved parody of the Last Supper as Parker's guests stuff themselves with food, especially with the white cake that Luther Nedeed brings. As soon as one eater vacates a seat, another takes his place. This feeding frenzy is a paradigm of Linden Hills where new residents rush in to take over one of the leases as soon as it is available. The table is also a reflection of Chester's marriage. Lycentia is not yet buried, but Chester has hired Willie and Lester to steam off the wallpaper in her bedroom so that the room will be repapeied and new furniture moved in during the funeral; thus all will be ready for Chester's next wife as soon as Lycentia is buried.

Laurel and Howard Dumont present a perfect example of Linden Hills' vacuous existence. Laurel's sense of emptiness, her preoccupation with swimming and classical music, and her feeling of not belonging anywhere all fall in line with the Nedeed vision of affluent black life; this marriage is contextualized by Linden Hills' history without missing a beat. Like the Nedeed wives whose lives and deaths set the standard, Luther comes to Laurel's house to inform her that, without her husband, "there are to be no more Dumonts at seven Twenty-Two Tupelo Drive" (245). In effect, she does not exist in that house. Laurel becomes another version of Nedeed wives who are unloved by their husbands and unconfinned by the love of a community. Without the sustaining value of community, love relationships morph into disjointed imitations that, in this case, resonate through time and space to infect the other couples in Linden Hills. Laurel eventually commits suicide in despair over the emptiness of her life because she can't find that place "they ain't got no name for yet, where you supposed to be at home," as her grandmother, Roberta Johnson tells her. When her husband of ten years decides to divorce her, she faces not just the emptiness of her life, but the emptiness of herself. Finally, a confrontation with Luther Nedeed makes Laurel realize that there is no inner core to her person, only a frightening void. Her education fed a professional ambition that left no room for human love. She never forged any ties with her past or developed any close sense of her own identity. Luther watches, immobile, as she kills herself by diving into an empty pool; her faceless body symbolizes her spiritual state. Laurel's death corresponds with Willa's ascent up the basement steps. While Laurel models the lives and deaths of Nedeed wives, Willa changes the script.

What saves Willa is what she learns about the previous Nedeed women from the homely records they have left behind through a bible, a set of cookbooks, and a family photo album, although the recovery of the past

does not yield romantic love. Each woman lacks love and affection, and this lack manifest itself in a different way for each woman. Kathleen Puhr states that, "physically and spiritually cut off from others, Willa uses the experience of these other women to heal herself, affirming her choice of being Luther's wife and taking responsibility for all her actions" (521). Willa uncovers a past that begins with Luwana Packerville; from her papers Willa learns how enslavement by her husband causes Luwana to lose faith in God, because Luwana's husband had bought her before he married her. After he uses her to produce the male heir he requires, he totally ignores her. Years pass; no one speaks to Luwana and she speaks to no one. But her total silence is not even noticed. She realizes that she has remained in slavery both literally and figuratively. She finds that she has allowed her husband completely to alienate her from every human connection, including her son. The child she bears is not the tangible symbol of their love; she concludes that "it is not just that he is Luther's son, he is Luther" (123). In desperation she writes and answers letters to hers. A religious woman, Luwana eventually loses her faith and decides, "There can be no God" (125).

The second Nedeed wife, Evelyn Creton bakes large amount of food in order to win her husband's attention, if not his love. When the device doesn't work, she starves herself to death by eating little. Next Nedeed wife, Priscilla McGuire tracks her own disappearance and invisibility through family photographs; in the last photos, she has cut out her face and in the empty space has written "me" (249). The Nedeed women have betrayed themselves when they have cooperated with their husbands' denial of their value. Willa departs from her predecessors and decides to turn the tide of Linden Hills and correct the legacy. When she emerges from the basement, she has found the identity she had lost. Willa is shocked by Priscilla's annihilation of herself. She glances down into a pan of water; there she sees the reflection of her soul. When

Willa sees the blurred outline of her dirty face, she realizes for the first time that she really exists. She cries, then drinks the water and decides to rebuild her life (268). In a recorded conversation with Toni Morrison, Naylor comments,

> After she had dug up the remnants of other Nedeed women, I created a way for her to see her own reflection in a pan of water because she had no self up to that moment. And when she realized that she had a face, then maybe she had other things going for her as well, and she could take her destiny in her own hands.

For the first time Willa examines herself and decides that she is responsible for her life; she is stuck down in the cellar not because of her parents or Luther, but because of herself. Willa realizes that she has made wrong choices and is continuing to make them.

> She was sitting there now, filthy, cold, and hungry, because she, Willa Prescott Nedeed, had walked down twelve concrete steps. And since that was the truth—the pure, irreducible truth-whenever she was good and ready, she could walk back up. (280)

In the conversation with Morrison, Naylor says that when she realized that Willa, content to be mother and wife, must ascend from the basement, Naylor exclaimed to the character, "Oh, Lord, woman, don't you know what the end of this book has got to be? You've gotta tear that whole house to the ground, or my book won't make any sense" (587).

Willa cleans the filthy basement; then, carrying the body of her son wrapped in an old lace bridal veil in her arms, she goes up the steps and pushes open the door leading into her kitchen. Willie is there, helping Luther get boxes down from the attic. When Willa steps into the kitchen, she accepts fully the realities of her life

with all of her mistakes; she is determined that nothing will hinder her from putting her life in Ofaer. However, Willa's rebirth breaks the downward cycle. When she ascends from Luther's hell, she reclaims her identity as an individual and a mother. She appears in the doorway and announces, "Luther... your son is dead". She begins to clean her kitchen, and when Luther tries to stop her, she hits him; she grabs him, while still holding on to the child. In their struggle, the Christmas tree crashes to the floor, its lighted candles setting the house on fire as Lester forces Willie to flee the scene. The house burns to the ground while the entire community watches it and *lets it burn,* denying the evidence before their eyes. Willa's journey ends in catastrophe; although Willa and Luther are destroyed in a flash fire that sweeps the house, still Willa is triumphant. She puts an end to the Nedeed dynasty and frees the rest of the community.

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12

The Sentiments of Women and Their Self Introspections in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*

Ramesh P. Chanvan

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* was released in the U.S. in 1998, Manju Kapur is a professor of English at Miranda House in Delhi. Having done her graduation from Miranda House, Manju did her MA in English from Dalhousie University in Canada. She further did M.Phil from Delhi University. Her first novel, Difficult Daughters, received the Commonwealth Award for the Eurasian region. The book is set during India's independence struggle and is partially based on the life of Kapur's own mother, Virmati. Presently she is busy doing a project on struggling with a novel based in both India and Canada, tentatively called The Immigrant. It is about a NRI marriage. She is a great woman and also happy that women's writing has come of age these days in India. She feels that women writers

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have many things to share with the people and they are always under pressure to express their own. According to her Indian women writers should get liberty to express their feeling to the readers.

Difficult daughters' is a unique novel by Manju Kapur. The novel is beautifully written, with a story that is fascinating in so many ways. Spanning three generations, this story centers on a woman born at the turn of the 20th century into a Punjabi family. It tells of an illicit affair and its wider political and social implications as well as not least the bothered issue, for Indian women, of marriage versus education. The protagonist Virmati falls in love with a neighbour, the Professor who is already married. That the Professor eventually marries Virmati, installs her in his home and that too alongside with his furious first wife. He helps her towards further studies in Lahore, which is small consolation to her scandalized family. Or even to Virmati, who finds that the battle for her own independence has created irrevocable lines of partition and pain around her. The backdrop of the story is set in the real world not just a real place and time, but one that feels real, seeping out of the pages to envelope the reader. "Difficult Daughters" is a fascinating insight into many things such as into history, into a distant culture, but, most importantly, into human hearts and minds. This novel has the capability to touch human mind from the core point. Despite being set during the Indian Partition, this is not an overtly political novel. However, a surprising amount of information about Partition, the political crisis that literally tore apart a nation is imparted. After reading the book the reader will definitely feel the urge to know more about the culture as well as the scenario.

It didn't work, largely for the reason that *Difficult Daughters* is a different kind of book, a quite sober and in some sense deeply conventional story set in Amritsar and Lahore around 1940. It's about a young woman named Virmati, who falls in love with a young Professor (Harish).

He represents modernity and opportunity for her – enlightenment, education – but he's a bit of a 'rake' in the 18th century sense of the term. He seduces her through culture, sending her Petrarchan sonnets, and casually drops references to Machiavelli and Greek tragedy. Predictably, the relationship goes deeply bad, for reasons that are only too obvious (he's a married rake).

In this context, Indian women novelists are gaining grounds worldwide and winning critical appraisal and international recognition. Now their work is no more considered as something derogatory, melodramatic or sub-stuff. The glaring cause of their success as novelist lies in the fact that they are born story-teller and they are endowed with the gift of delving deep into the workings of human mind and heart with sympathy, sensitivity and understanding. But there is also the common element of conflict of values and fighting between different ways of life. Among the prolific women novelists like Kamla Markanday, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Jhumpa Lahiri; Manju Kapur is also a distinguished figure in the world of novels. Till date, she has written four novels: i.e. *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), and *The Immigrant* (2008). In all her novels, male characters are dominating but they do not come in the definition of a hero. They are affecting the psyche of women to such an extent that all the major women characters whether they are Virmati, (*Difficult Daughters*), Astha (*A married woman*), Nisha (*Home*) or Nina (*The Immigrant*), all are on the verge of secluding themselves from the company of man. These four major women characters are searching a place for themselves in the male-dominated society *ab initio*. Society, morality, values are like bondage to them, so all of them are leading forward in an ambiguous manner in the midst of relentless urbanization and the far reaching western influences. Dr. Ashok Kumar says aright:

"A major preoccupation in recent Indian women's

> writing has been a delineation of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships. In a culture where individualism and protest have often remained alien ideas and marital bliss and the women's role at home is a central focus, it is interesting to see the emergence of not just an essential Indian sensibility but an expression of cultural displacement. Manju Kapur has joined the growing number of women writers from India on whom the image of the suffering but stoic woman eventually breaking traditional boundaries has had a significant impact" (Ashok Kumar, 165)

Through her very first protagonist Virmati, Manju Kapur has dealt with the theme of travails in self-identity *vis avis* socio-cultural identity. In the same novel, the second protagonist or third generation Ida again revolts against the ways and follies of her mother Virmati. She embarks on her search to know her mother's legacy after she dies: the novel *Difficult Daughters* opens with the anguishing voice of Ida:

> "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother. Now she was gone and I stared at the fire that rose from her shriveled body, dry-eyed, leaden, half dead myself, while my relatives clustered around the pyre and wept" (*DD*,1).

She becomes a more typical daughter of a difficult daughter Virmati. Virmati's life has been a saga of pain and protest against the institutions of family, marriage, tradition and society. All her novels take shape in family background. In an interview with Jai Arjun Manju Kapur says:

> "Literature by women, about families, always has these larger considerations, with years of studying texts, it becomes almost second nature to look beneath the surface- at social and economic forces, gender relationships and how they are played out

> in an arena that, in my writing happens to be the home. But then, all sort of things happening outside do affect what is happening inside the home"(Singh, 167)

Difficult Daughters is well-plotted and has truly convincing characterization (like many classic English "rake" stories, its villain is in some ways more likeable than its heroine). But it is also interesting for reasons that are not just literary; Kapur has an unusual angle on the involvement of women in Gandhi's Swaraj agitations.

Different Daughters' is making into account the complexity of life, different histories, cultures and different structures of values, the Woman's Question, despite basic solidarity, needs to be tackled in relation to the socio-cultural situation. The impact of patriarchy on the Indian society varies from the one in the West and therefore, the Indian women novelists have tried to evolve their own stream of feminism grounded in reality. They have their own concerns, priorities as well as their own ways of dealing with the predicament of their women protagonists.

The novels has set around the turbulent years of World War II and the Partition of India, Manju Kapoor realistically depicts women of three generations, focusing on Virmati, the difficult daughter of the second generations. The opening line of the novel gives a jolt to the reader: "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother". (Jaidev,122) This cryptic statement is made by Virmati's only daughter, Ida, a divorcee and childless perforce. She could not develop an understanding with her mother during her life time and after Virmati's death this realization engulfs her with guilt. Ida sets out on a journey into her mother's past by piecing together the fragments of memory in search of a woman she could know and understand. Virmati had been evasive about her past with Ida, and now she hoped to fill the critical gaps.

The consciousness of the reader shuttles between the present and the past along with Ida who visits different places and meets her mother's relatives and acquaintances to know about Virmati, the woman. *Difficult Daughters'* is a tale of struggle, traditional repression and independence. This is a book for those who are sensitive and romantic enough to feel and understand India. Struggle against superstition and social imagination has come with transparent discussion. The author very intelligently depicted the Indian scenario with the help of her characters. The pain and horrible experience of partition is the key word of this novel.

Virmati undergoes an ordeal in her struggle in the pursuit of her love with Professor Harish Chandar. She falls in love with the professor, Harish Chandar, who is already married and moves earth and heaven to marry him. The factors that are responsible for her to fall in love are very important to appreciate her struggle. As she is the eldest of the eleven children of her parents, the responsibility of looking after her ten younger kin is forced upon her. She has to perform the duties of a mother when she is in her teens. Thus she is the second mother to her younger sisters and brothers. She has been forced to miss her leisure and personal interest at this age. She has also denied her mother's love and affection as her mother happens to pay her attention naturally to her younger siblings. It affects her studies as well.

Subsequently, she is betrothed to a canal engineer when she is yet to complete seventeen years of her age. These factors affect her so deeply that she begins to long for genuine love from elsewhere. At this juncture, she gets to know the professor who is a tenant of her uncle and thus is a neighbour to her family. She admires his love of music, books and scholarship. College, she is attracted by his teaching deeply. Ironically, it is the professor who is first drawn towards Virmati. He falls head over heels in love with owing to his disappointment in the first marriage. His first marriage is a child marriage.

He had been married off to Ganga at three. Then he had pursued his studies which led him to go abroad for M.A in English. As a foreign return, he feels that his illiterate wife, Ganga is not a proper match for him. In despair, when he notices Virmati as being ambitious in acquiring more and more education and as being a charming young girl, he falls for her.

Their mutual admiration which started in the class room leads them to meet each other in his house and in the house of his friend secretly. On this occasion, he touches her on her neck. Though she is aware of the complications if she reciprocates to his love, she is unable to ignore him owing to her traditional mindset. It means that she feels that she is tainted by his touch and it is unethical to marry anyone other than the one who has touched her. Thus she feels that she is obliged to marry the professor rather than her fiancé.

In the mean time, she completes her B.A and subsequently her parents make arrangements to conduct her marriage with Inderjit. She expects the professor to suggest a solution to her to overcome the problem of her marriage but in vain. She becomes an object of despair due to the indifference of the professor. Consequently she decides to commit suicide by drowning herself in the Tarsika canal. She sends a note about her decision to the professor through a letter and manages to reach the cannel without being suspected by anybody. Then she jumps into the canal for suicide.

In the meanwhile, the professor sends his wife to Kasturi to inform her about her daughter's act. Kasturi receives a double shock. Firstly, she is shocked to know that her daughter has gone to commit suicide. Secondly, she wonders how the professor has come to know about her decision and thus is given to suspect that her daughter is in love with the professor. However, the servants of her family rush to the cannel in time and rescue her from the cannel. When her parents demand an explanation for her behaviour, she hides the real reason and lies that

she wants to study further and she is not interested in marrying Inderjit. She feels that her daughter has been spoilt by her education because of which she has betrayed her family. Anita Juneja points out in this regard thus: "She kept on saying that all her education had achieved was the destruction of her family."(AJ, 64)

Though she escapes from the arrangements of her marriage with Inderjit as she is replaced by her next sister, Indumati, Virmati fails to succeed in her mission completely. It means that she has decided to commit suicide in her dismay that she and Harish Chandra are likely to be separated if her marriage with Inderjit had been conducted. Even though her wedding with her fiancé is cancelled, she is not let free to pursue her love with Harish Chandar. Since her mother is able to suspect that there is love between them, she sees to it that Virmati is locked in the godown. Anita Juneja comments on the reason for Virmati's parents to keep her in confinement in the go down thus: "they locked her in the godown to save her from herself and the Professor." (AJ, 2)

Yet they are able to find a means to send letters to each other and thus they keep up their love through the secret communication. However, an obstacle is created in the flow of their love subsequently in the form of Ganga's pregnancy. Virmati learns that Ganga has become pregnant and feels guilty that her love with Harish Chandra shall cause chaos to the life of Ganga. Subsequently, she decides to forget him and thus destroys his love letters sent to him earlier. Her decision is described by Anita Juneja as follows: "When Virmati came to know about the pregnancy of his wife and she had to keep up her family's traditions. She resolved to forget the Professor, burned all of his letters sent to her and started trying to live within the moral code." (AJ, 2)

Subsequently, she expresses her interest to study BT course in Lahore. Her parents also agreed to send her in order to keep her away from the professor. She writes a letter informing the professor that there is no necessity

for them to exchange letters there after and goes to Lahore accompanied by her mother to join BT course in Rai Bahadur Sohan Lal Training College. Her mother meets the principal and gets her assurance that she would take care of Virmati completely. She gets Swarna Lata, an M.A student, as her room mate in the college hostel and they become friends soon.

However, the Professor continues his chase of Virmati in Lahore too. He keeps on writing letter after letter prior to his visit to the college personally. Virmati follows a sense of self-control strongly and remains indifferent to his letters for quite some time and then reminds him her reply that his letters would cause her expulsion from her college. Then he meets his friend, Syed Husain, in Lahore and on his advice to persist till she gives in, he continues to write letters to her. Then he makes visit after visit to her college but she refuses to meet him thrice. She yields to his request and meets him on the fourth visit.

Though he moves heaven and earth to persuade her to accept his love, Virmati is very cautious in her conversation with him. Her determination not to yield to his pressure is explicit in the text as follows:

> "You are everything to me. All the sons and daughters in the world are nothing next to you. Virmati was sure she should not believe him. Even allowing him for the fact that he might be telling the truth, was it desirable for a man to abandon his children for the love of a woman? And what about her? The daughter had been bad enough. Now she would be ruining one more child's life. How could she do it?"(*DD*, 12)

Then he persuades her to go with him to the residence of his friend. He tries to convince her that it is not wrong for them to love and make love. He asks her to be his co-wife and justifies the demand in his favour on the account of two factors. He makes reference to the prevalence of co-wife in Indian social traditions and argues

that she cannot change this system in the society by refusing to become his co-wife. Then he informs her that he is not able to live with his wife in any meaningful way. He implies that he needs her for living in a meaningful way. Harish Chandra is a perfect example of womanizer. Though he is a foreign educated and a lecturer in English, there is reform in his mindset towards woman and remains like that of our patriarchy which believes that woman is meant for the pleasure of man.

Virmati resists his attempts to seduce her but in vain. Indeed, she asks him to marry her if he is so much interested in her as he has stated. He makes an assurance that he would marry her and then caresses her so cleverly that she yields to his desire gradually. It is worthwhile to note the depiction of how Harish seduces Virmati in the narrative as follows:

> "Aren't you mine? And I yours? Body and soul, heart and mind? I worship you, Viru, I want to express it, that's all.' The Professor got up and pressed his lips to her throat, her ears, her chin, her lips, murmuring endearments while his breath came faster. He seemed to be in a trance. Dazed, Virmati didn't think it would be fair to bring up the fact of his existing wife and children. But this wasn't right either. 'Then marry me', she said, trying to push him away. 'Marry me and make it clear to everybody.' I will, I will, darling, I will. Just give me time.' His hands held her face, stroked her hair, pushed her against the pillows, wandered lightly over her skin, loosened the drawstring of his salwar, opened the hooks of her kameez." (*DD*, 125)

As soon as this incidence is over she feels guilty and cries for sometime. Then she gets out of her repentance and tries to justify Harish Chandra's act. She behaves so because she knows that she is meant to his woman as she has already resolved to marry none other than

him. Their first love paves the way for them to meet and indulge in love-making frequently. As a result, she becomes pregnant.

It is important to note that she becomes an object of the struggle between love and marriage. While she shows her inclination towards marrying Harish Chandar, the latter shows his inclination to loving her without marriage. When she misses her menstrual cycle, she goes to her house with an idea to get her conception terminated with the help of local woman the *dai*.She also tries to bring it to the knowledge of Harish Chandar but fails to find any means to keep him informed. When she does not find the *dai*, she returns to her hostel. She seeks Swarna Lata for help and thus the latter makes an arrangement for the abortion with the help of Swarna Lata's associate Miss Datta.

Virmati has to meet the doctor twice in Miss Datta's residence before the abortion. On her first visit, the doctor examines her in general and confirms that she is pregnant. On the second visit, she undergoes the abortion. In the mean while she has to write her examinations. As she has not adequate money to meet the expenditure for her abortion, she sells her gold bangles and settles the expenditure. Thus Virmati faces both physical and mental challenges for the sake of her love with Harish Chandar. Her pre-marital pregnancy and abortion suggest that she has broken the taboos related to woman laid down in our tradition.

As soon as she completes her BT examinations, she returns to her house. On one day she meets Harish Chandar and reminds him that he has remained irresponsible in his failure to be in touch with her. She feels that if he had been available for contact she would have avoided the abortion. She also points out that he has betrayed her in his assurance that she would not become pregnant because of their union. He justifies his helplessness by explaining that he has deliberately suspended his communication with her as he has got

examinations fearing that his contact would disturb her studies. He states that he has not been available in Amritsar when she tried to contact him as he had gone to his native village on account of his baby's mundane. When Harish presses a letter into her hand, her state of mind reflects her struggle between love and marriage and her anguish consequently is presented in the novel thus:

> "The Professor pressed a letter into her hand as she left. She could feel him watching her as she slowly started to ridehome. She tucked those pages of love inside the front of her kameez, and thought that now he hardly needed letters to attach her to him. She was his for life, whether he ever married her or not. Her body was marked by him, she could never look elsewhere, never entertain another choice" (*DD*, 117)

Harish Chander created a lot of problems by his act of touching Virmati on her neck when she was studying B.A. She had to make an attempt to commit suicide to cancel her wedding with Inderjit with whom she had been betrothed for quite a long time. She had to lie that she tried to die because she wanted to study further. She had to undergo a sort of house prison and was denied participation in the wedding of her sister. She had to suffer from all such hardships because of his touch. His second touch in the form of intercourse landed her into so many troubles again. She had to tell lies to get bangles from her father for meeting the expenditure she incurred for the abortion. She had to undergo the humiliation of not only undergoing abortion before marriage but also getting her pregnancy terminated by a male doctor.

As soon as she completes her BT, she receives invitation for the post of principal in Sirmaur. When the Maharani of this small state instructs Lala Diwan Chand to recommend a woman for principal, he remembers Virmati and approaches her parents to advise Virmati to accept the offer. Indeed, Kasturi is not interested to

concede the matter as she wants her daughter to remain at home till she realizes the importance of her marriage. She fears that her daughter may not obey them she becomes independent through her employment. At the same time, Kasturi knows that her daughter is not interested in the matters related to her marriage. However, her husband persuades her to allow Virmati to accept the job of principal.

When her parents seek her willingness to accept the offer as principal, Virmati weighs the pros and corns of her stay at home. She knows that her parents shall annoy her by raising the matter of her marriage every now and then and also realizes that she cannot meet the Professor freely. Instead of undergoing such difficulties, she feels that it is better for her to go to a distant place by accepting the job offer of principal. Besides, she has the urge to work after obtaining B.A. B.T degrees. Thus she conveys that she shall be ready for the job.

Virmati's educational qualification makes such a good impression that the Maharani cancels the interview and appoints her as principal of Pratibha Kanya Vidyalaya directly. Nevertheless the Maharani becomes apprehensive of her young age. The prime minister comes to her rescue by giving assurance about her. Thus she is reminded that her conduct must be good as it is required for the betterment of the girl students of the school. She assures that she shall abide by the norms laid by the Maharani. She is given a two-room cottage which remained abandoned for many years. Subsequently, she brings about improvement in the school. Since childhood, she has to bear the heavy responsibility of becoming a small mother of younger brothers and sisters. Her desire to study becomes more fervent when she meets Shakuntala, her cousin. After meeting Shakuntala, she feels the need to make her own existence and leads a life on her own terms. Ultimately she breaks the traditions and old family system. But unfortunately, she keeps on becoming a pendulum between education and marriage. When she

is compelled to marry the canal engineer, she protests and writes a letter to Professor Harish whom she loves dearly and says:

> "I couldn't think, and all I heard around me was talk of my marriage. If I was to be a rubber doll for others to move as they willed, then I didn't want to live. I thought of what you taught us about Sydney carton, and how noble and fine it seemed at the moment of his death. His last words echoed in my ears all that day. So you of all people should understand my actions! "(*DD*,92)

When she rejects this marriage proposal, she is treated more harshly. She just beholds each happening occurring around her and keeps mum but soon she takes her decision in spite of several unprecedented hurdles:

> "I am going to Lahore to do my BT. I want to be a teacher like you and Shakuntala Pehnji. Perhaps my family will also benefit by what I do, as yours has done. As for me, I never stopped learning from you, whether it was in the classroom or outside.

Mati says at least I wouldn't be at home to remind her of the eternal disgrace I am to everybody. I, too, want a fresh start. It will be a great relief for me to leave this house. May be Bade Baoji will consent to come here after I have gone" (*DD*,107-108)

She even does not tolerate the irresolute attitude of Harish, she directly scolds him when he shows his helplessness to marry her:

> "I break my engagement because of you, blacken my family's name, am locked up inside my house, get sent to Lahore because no one knows what to do with me. Here I am in the position of being your secret wife, full of shame, wondering what people will say if they find out, not being able

> to live in peace, study in peace...and why? Because I am an idiot" (*DD*,149)

And she doubts his love:

> "Now you want to prolong the situation. Why don't we get married? You say your family makes no difference. But still you want to continue in this way. Be honest with me. I can bear anything but this continuous irresolution. Swarna is right. Men do take advantage of women!" (DD, 149)

It is interesting to note that Virmati talks of her identity, her freedom but her freedom is confined only to her body and heart. She does not attempt to utilize her education as Shakuntala did. Dr. S. Prasanna Sree comments:

> "Virmati struggle between the physical and moral; the head and heart. Finally she gives way to her heart and body. Virmati is engaged to an engineer initially but series of incidents propel the family members to postpone the wedding. This incident paves way for Virmati to begin an illicit relationship, with the married Professor living next door. Virmati undergoes the trails and tribulations of a love that has little hope of social acceptance. The Oxford returned professor finds little to share with his uneducated wife and is unable to resist the charms of Virmati, who is innocent and hungry for knowledge and love. Virmati who appears "flower like against the back drop of male students the Oxford returned professor forces himself into her mind and heart by spreading his anguish and desire at her feet"(Milhoutra, 175)

Her internal and external conflict becomes louder when her mother Kasturi's profound identification with Virmati makes her think of her daughter's thoughts of independence as sheer selfishness smacking of ingratitude.

Her mother better knows the norms of patriarchal society so when Virmati revolts against patriarchal values, her mother takes it to be a revolt against her own self. Dr. Ruby Milhoutra says:

> "It is only Virmati who is the difficult daughter in the prosperous merchant family of Lala Diwan Chand. While in the generation of Kasturi, womans role was confined to childbearing and kitchen work, the generation of Virmati took some bold and radical steps in joining the political movement for India's freedom, asserted the need for women education and independence. As a non-chalant representative of the middle generation, Virmati breaks away from the tradition bound limits of Indian women" (Milhoutra ,164)

Virmati's illicit relation with professor makes her life more crucial. She becomes a stigma to the family reputation. She is compelled to lead a life of compromises quite in prosecution with her ideals from which she finds no escape. P. Sudha Sree says:

> "There is an unresolved dichotomy in the character portrayal of Virmati, the female protagonist .While she is strong willed to resist all kind of social and family pressure, she is not strong enough to stay away from Professor's influence" (Sree P Sudha,164)

One more bolt comes to her when she becomes pregnant and finds that her love Harish for whom she revolted against each emotional and social part of her life is indifferent to her state, she splits into pieces. She herself goes for an abortion to be done. After abortion she realizes half the meaning to be called woman and the illusion of romantic love. Ida says:

> "That was all she wanted to do. Forget. Forget, forget, forget. She felt a deep emptiness inside her, which she construed as yearning for the Professor.

> Oh, how she longed to meet him, to throw herself on his chest, babble out her story, feel his love and sympathy, his regret that he wasn't there pouring over her in a great tidal wave that would cleanse her of all guilt and sorrow!"(*DD*,173)

After much difficulty and condemnation she is married to the Prof. Harish, the second stage of her suffering begins. In the house of Harish, she is not considered an identity but the second wife of Harish who has snatched the rights of his first wife Ganga. She is a sinner to the backbone. When she dies, she is neither cremated according to her wishes nor her voice and her identity is recognized by anybody. Even her daughter does not consider the ways of her mother justified. Chandra Holm comments:

> "It is also not very flattering about what happens to young Indian girls when they are allowed some 'freedom'. Any parent who believes what is written in the book would lock up the daughter again, because it is better not to give the daughter any freedom because it will be so grossly 'misused"(Holm Chandra)

Though Virmati involves herself deeply in teaching, she is unable to escape from the thoughts about the professor. Her longing for him is intensified by the ardent letters by him. However, she responds in negation when he informs her that he is willing to visit her. Besides, her disgust caused by his indecisiveness regarding their marriage is presented thus: "She wrote to the Professor that she was sick and tired of waiting for him. If he couldn't make up his mind to marry her, then she might as well devote herself seriously to her career. Nahan was not the place to do it. Either in Lahore or, if her family didn't agree, Jullunder." (*DD*, 188)

Yet the professor fails to comply with her response and arrives at her place one day. Virmati hesitates to

allow him to stay with her in the cottage lest it is detected by others. If it goes to the knowledge of the Maharani, she has to lose her job. Therefore, she takes the professor to the prime minister and obtains his permission for his stay there by coaxing that his visit is an unexpected one. The professor stays for one more day and leaves Nahan.

After the rest of the year is over, the professor calls on Virmati in her residence once again after dark. Virmati feels scared to see him at that time and shows reluctance to admit him into her residence. The conversation between them reveals it thus: -

> "The Professor snaked his hand and foot in between the space and pushed. The door gave way a little. Virmati found herself resisting. 'Why have you come? She asked. 'First tell me. Why have you come? Is it going to be the same story all over again?' 'Whatever do you mean, darling? Let me in, will you?' He pushed harder. Now more of his leg was inside. 'No, I won't. Not until you answer me.' cried Virmati, her voice low and passionate. 'All this you have never been straight with me.' 'First let me come in. How can we talk like this?' Virmati's hold slackened, and the professor stepped inside and shut the door behind him. Come here darling,' he caressed. 'Be reasonable." (*DD*, 188-89)

Having gained entry into her cottage, he speaks to her appealingly explaining his longing for her. Though Virmati is also fond of him, she resists his seductive appeal and insists him to tell her why he has come to her. He tries to evade her question by way of expressing his deep love for her. When he repeats that he loves her more she loves him time and again, she asks him pointedly to prove his love. It suggests that she is ready to yield to his sexual need without getting married to her. She is trapped in the struggle between love and marriage. Though she loves the Professor and is ready to share

herself with him, she feels guilty of doing it with the social sanction in the form of marriage. On the other hand, the Professor does not comply with her demand as he is surrounded by so many complications including his married status. Yet he needs Virmati for the gratification of his overwhelming passion for her.

Virmati fails in resistance against the seduction of the Professor and gives into the pressure of the Professor. They stay together the whole night in her cottage. She derives an immense pleasure in his company. She wishes that her union with the Professor and its consequent bliss should continue for ever. At the same time, she has not forgotten that their relationship should not be illegal and thus she reminds him of her embarrassment without being married as follows:

> "You think it's so easy for me!' She turned on him. 'It isn't! People wondering all the time. Why I'm not married. What should I say? That my lover is a coward? That he is waiting for permission from his family to bring home a second wife? Virmati had never dared to say so much. She stopped. She hadn't realized how angry and humiliated she was, and her eyes filled with tears." (*DD*, 193-94)

Virmati faces the consequences of the visit of the Professor. The prime minister and the Maharani have come to know about the whole night stay of the professor with Virmati in her residence and therefore decided to terminate her from the service. However, they do it indirectly by informing her that she is relieved from duties to facilitate her for further studies. Virmati is aware of the fact that she is removed from her job because on account of her relationship with the professor. Though she does not repent for the loss of her job, she feels anguish over the hardship she faces because of her love with the Professor. When she leaves Nahan, her disturbed state of mind revealed in the narrative as follows: "How

many new beginnings had her relationship with the Professor led her to? That sense of hope was beginning to feel stale." (*DD*, 197-98)

She decides to forget her marriage with the Professor for there is no positive sign from in that regard. So she sets out to go to Shantiniketan where she thinks of spending her entire life. When she reaches Delhi, she remembers that the poet-friend of the Professor dwells there. It is in his residence, she and the Professor used to meet and share each other during her BT course. As the poet friend of Harish is aware of their relationship, she feels like meeting him before she goes to Shantiniketan. Subsequently, she meets him in his house. On his demand, she explains how the Professor has been disinclined towards marrying her and hence she has decided not to wait for him.

On hearing the story of Virmati, poet feels that he should do something to get them married. He requests Virmati to wait for a couple of days in his house and at the same time he sends a telegram to the Professor asking him to arrive there at once. The Professor responds to his message positively and reaches his house the next day. On his arrival, poet persuades him to marry her thus:

> "Harish and the poet were arguing. 'You must marry her now, or she will be lost to you forever.' 'What can I do? I am hemmed in and tortured on all sides. I know I have been unfair to her – I know. And yet what can I do?' Harish turned an agitated face to the poet. 'Everybody will condemn me, her. My children will never accept it, nor my mother. ... 'No, no,' reassured the poet quickly. 'I am not asking for explanations. It is difficult, I know. But my friend, there is a time for action, and in your case that time is undeniably before you. Or,' he paused, ' be prepared to let her go.' Harish looked distraught. 'What can I do?'

> He asked helplessly. 'My wife, my son ...' The poet tich-tiched in exasperation. 'Bhai, what can they do? Now you get married. Nothing is simpler. A pundit will be arranged - that's all you really need. You can take the pheras here - right here where you are sitting, in this angan. If you can't bring yourself to do this, you will never see her again" (*DD*, 201)

The image of traditional family with reference to marriage is recurrent motif in all Kapur's novels including *Difficult Daughters*. The episodes of Kasturi, Lajwanti and Ganga elucidate the notion of marriage vividly. Kasturi is Virmati's mother. She is also the daughter of very affluent parents. Her father is a big merchant. As he is a member of the *Arya Samaj*, he sends her to school following its doctrine with regard to education for women. However, the people of the Arya Samaj are very particular about the purpose of education. They want female education for their daughters to become strong but not to change their community customs. They view change as an evil and thus are opposed to it. It is reflected in the episodes of Kasturi. She is sent to a missionary school but her mother becomes intolerant when she discovers the influence of Christianity on her. It is explicit in the narrative as follows:

> "Sultanpur, West Punjab, 1904. Kasturi was seven and had been going to the mission school for only few months when her parents caught her praying to a picture of Christ, something the nice Bengali teacher said herself did. Her mother had torn the picture, screamed and shouted, and threatened to marry her off, before she brought further disgrace to the family"(*DD*, 61)

Her uncle comes to her rescue by making an objection to the marriage for Kasturi. Though he knows that the British use the mission school as a means of colonizing the minds of Indian students, he is not ready to approve

Kasturi's mother's decision. He considers that such decisions are bound to encourage child-marriages which in turn amount to betraying Dayanad Saraswati and the principles of the Arya Samaj. He insists that Kasturi should not be married off before she attains the age of sixteen. Hence the suggestion of prohibition of marriage and compulsory education for girls up to the age sixteen years is evinced in the dialogue between Kasturi's mother and uncle as follows:

> 'That's all very well,'said the irate mother. 'But this witch sitting at home will have nothing better than to do than think she is a Christian. Who will marry her then, I would like to know?' 'Sixteen, and the best bridegroom in the Punjab,' said Kasturi's uncle, flapping the advertisements in the *Arya Patrika*, advertisements of educated boys wanting educated girls. 'Till then, She must go to school. I started one for four boys, I will do the same for the girls. Had I done so sooner, there would have been no question of exposing our daughter to Christian schools" (*DD*, 61)

The consciousness of the reader shuttles between the present and the past along with Ida who visits different places and meets her mother's relatives and acquaintances to know about Virmati, the woman.

Virmati, being the eldest, is burdened with family duties because of her mother's incessant pregnancies. Belonging to an austere and high minded Punjabi family, she grows up with the conditioning that the duty of every girl 'is to get married' and a woman's 'shaan' is in her home and not in doing a job. She is already engaged to a canal engineer, Inderjeet. However, seeds of aspiration are planted in Virmati when she sees Shakuntala, her cousin, tasting the 'wine of freedom'. She secretly nurtures the desire of being independent and leading a life of her own she wants to shoulder responsibilities that go beyond a husband and children. She realises that it is useless

to look for answers inside the home as the "language of feeling had never flown" between Virmati and Kasturi, her mother. She had to look outside .... to education, to freedom and the bright lights of Lahore College even if "she had to fight her mother who was so sure that her education was practically over" (DD,17) Asserting herself, she not only clears her FA but joins A.S. College, "the bastion of male learning".

It is here that the Oxford- returned Professor, her neighbour, notices her particularly, 'flower like, against a back drop of male students' and forces himself into her mind and heart by spreading his anguish at her feet. Caught in the whirlpool of misplaced passion towards the already married Professor, she has the temerity to spurn marriage, attempts suicide and bears confinement. However, she does realize the hopelessness of her illicit love when she learns about the pregnancy of the Professor's wife. How could it be true? Man professing his love for her on the one hand and making his wife pregnant on the other. At this juncture, decisively and brusquely she cuts him saying that "You think you can do what you like so long as you go on saying you love" and goes to Lahore for further studies.

Thus far we see the budding of a "New Woman' in Virmati who does not want 'to be a rubber doll for others to move as they willed" (*DD*,85) Defying patriarchal notions that enforce a woman towards domesticity, she asserts her individuality and aspires self-reliance through education. She is not a silent rebel but is bold, outspoken, determined and action-oriented. She knows she can not depend upon the Professor to sort out the domestic situation and proceeds to tackle it on her own. Later, she very decisively and coolly shuns the Professor, ignoring his plea and keeps the reins in her hand. She displays a marvellous strength of mind in overcoming her dejection. She is 'strong to bear the pain, silently, without anyone knowing" (DD,101) The determined and unperturbed manner in which she burns the Professor's

letters show her resolution to close the chapter and look forward to a meaningful life in Lahore.

But does Virmati blossom into a 'New Woman' in the real sense? No. Inspite of her initial revolt against the family and firm stand against the Professor, she succumbs to his implorations and passion in Lahore. Loss of virginity pricks her conscience but then she overcomes the guilt by rationalizing it as "outmoded morality" (*DD*,114) She had come to Lahore to broaden her horizons but instead she gets involved in a useless love, doubtful marriage and unwed pregnancy. The initial tenacious and assertive self gradually wanes away into a pawn whom the Professor tells "just what to look for, what to admire, what to criticize". (*DD*,119) she wants to spread her wings like Swarnalata, her roommate, who is committed to "meaningful activities" regarding the freedom movement and women's emancipation. But her emotional dependence on the Professor who constantly evades the question of marriage, stops her from doing anything that he disapproves — "may be I could be like Swarna from the inside, secretly". (*DD*,124) At the Punjab Women's Student Conference, she is amazed at "how large an area of life women wanted to appropriate for themselves" (*DD*,132) But these larger spaces are not for her. She wastes her time awaiting the furtive meetings with the Professor in spite of the awareness that there were "myriad instances of where she felt she had been weak or wronged". (*DD*,129) she is being used and the Professor wants to have the cake and eat it too. He enjoys the better of the two worlds and is not there even at the most crucial time when she undergoes the termination of the pregnancy. Even afterwards when the Professor eventually marries her very reluctantly, she is given a pariah status and faces exclusion from hearth etc. Which is the sole domain of the Professor's first wife, Ganga.

Virmati lives in a cramped space and it forced into submission thought in a very subtle manner as Jaidev (1992 : 57) writes in another context Indeed, any

sophisticated structure today functions not by direct, visible exploitation but by making the victims willingly, freely and happily give in to its imperatives Professor Harish's attitude towards her is patronising and demeaning. His interest in her is an extension of sell love ... awakening her intellect and emotions inflates his ego. Undergoing a gradual process of self-effacement, her energies are directed towards pleasing him while she herself remains parched. She finds M.A. in Philosophy dull, abstract and meaningless but studying it was her only means of escape. She wished "Harish had thought another subject suitable for her. She also wished it was not such an uphill task, being worthy of him". (*DD*,237). In fact, she remains 'difficult' only as a daughter towards her grandfather who always championed her cause, her father who was very understanding and allowed her to study further and towards her mother who certainly had Virmati's good at heart.

Thus, though she dares to cross one patriarchal threshold, she is caught into another where her free spirit is curbed and all she does is 'adjust, compromise and adapt'. She could have put her foot down saying 'she will be her own mistress and relate to him with dignity or not at all. Perhaps the words were at the back of her mind, teasing her tongue with their shadowy sounds (*DD*,236) but she does not. May be her mind had gone "soft and pulpy with repeated complying". (*DD*,236) Thus, in Virmati we see the incipient New Woman who is conscious, introspective, educated, wants to carve a life for herself, to some extent she even conveys a personal vision of womanhood by violating current social codes yet she lacks confidence, self control, farsightedness and is psychically imprisoned with an underlying need to be emotionally and intellectually dependant on a superior force ..... Professor Harish and it is precisely this knowledge through which the patriarchy works. She fails to break the 'dependence syndrome' (*Nahal* , 17) and halts on the path to full human status.

It is possible to trace the feminism implicit in the novel through Ida's impatience towards her mother's weaknesses. When her Parvati Masi says that Virmati was a simple girl at heart, Ida says "I hate the word 'Simple'. Nobody has any business to live in the world and know nothing about its ways"*(DD*,207). No woman, who dares to spurn patriarchal protection, can afford to be ignorant, simple or naive. Surely, Virmati's unwed pregnancy and then its heartless termination is unpalatable to Ida who finally breaks up with her husband Prabhakar, because he had forced her to have an abortion. "In denying that incipient little thing in my belly, he sowed the seeds of our break up" (*DD*,144) And then, does passion so transform an individual that Virmati fails to see things in the right perspective? She not only disregards her filial duty but also becomes a victimizer by usurping what rightfully belongs to Ganga, the Professor's first wife, thereby giving a set back to the much needed feeling of sisterhood among women. The concluding lines of the novel reiterate Ida's rejection of Virmati, not as a mother but as a woman. "This book weaves a connection between my mother and me, each word a brick in a mansion I made with my head and my heart. Now live in it, Mama, and leave me be. Do not haunt me any more". (*DD*.258) Ida, who grew up struggling to be the model daughter, does not have the heart to reject Virmati, the mother, but her head, the rationale, rejects her as a woman after having an insight into Virmati's past.

Through Ida's admiration for Swarnalata, who enters into a wider sociopolitical sphere, the novelist seems to be saying that a woman can maintain her individuality and pursue her interest without threatening the family structures. Thus a woman should basically strive towards a fine interdependent partnership. But if she feels suffocated, then a voice ought to be raised and there should be a total breaking away, like Ida. But merely transcending societal norms is not enough. A woman should be aware, self controlled, strong willed, self reliant

and rational, having faith in the inner strength of womanhood. A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense. Thus Manju Kapoor's Difficult Daughters is a feminist discourse not because she is a woman writing about women but because, as Jaidev puts it she "has understood a woman both as a woman and as a person pressurized by all kinds of visible and invisible contexts". (Nahal, 68). She presents feminism at its most same keeping in mind the Indian context.

The narrative of Shakuntala highlights the extreme impact of modern education. Her attitude is influenced by the modern education resulting in her rejection of marriage completely. She takes maximum advantage of education by getting employment and by responding to the cause of the nation. Thus she feels that she has established her independence.

Somnath is also similar to his sister as far as marriage is concerned. He is not interested in marriage before establishing an independent business career. It suggests that the people of the country are influenced by the national struggle for independence.

Swarna Lata emerges as the most desirable character with the perfect balance between education and marriage. She adopts both of them without getting each disturbed by the other. According to Seema Malik, the author suggests through Swarna Lata that a woman can maintain her individuality and pursue her interest without threatening the family structures. Thus a woman should basically strive towards a fine interdependent partnership. But if she feels suffocated, then the voice ought to be raised and there should be a total breaking away ... But merely transcending societal norms is not enough. A woman should be aware, self-controlled, strong-willed, self- reliant and rational, having faith in the inner strength of womanhood. A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense.

Virmati undergoes the conflict between Education and Marriage. Her passion for education and independence is whitened by her cousin. Shakuntala. While she nurses her passion for higher studies, she is betrothed to a canal engineer whose thoughts she does cherish until she is touched by Harish Chandar. She is able to escape from marriage initially due to one death in the family of each. When she feels that she has been tainted by the touch of the professor, she manipulates higher education to cancel her wedding with her fiancé and to marry the one who has touched her. Thus in the conflict between Education and Marriage, education gains the edge over marriage.The poet's words work out that Harish agrees to marry her the next day with a sense of reluctance. Thus a pundit arrives the next day and the wedding is conducted observing the rituals as much as possible. The parents of the poet perform the duties of the bride and hand Virmati over to Harish while Harish and Virmati are declared as husband and wife ritualistically.

Virmati undergoes a long struggle to get the status of wife of Harish. She has to move earth and heaven to marry Harish, who has changed Virmati's mind to reject her wedding with Inderjit and injected love in her. She undergoes hardships caused her parents in the form of house imprisonment and denial to attend the wedding of her sister. She has to put up with Harish who pesters upon her to yield to his sexual urge. She becomes a victim of premarital pregnancy caused by Harish and undergoes the mental and physical torture through the abortion. In the mean time, she requests him to marry her but her appeal is turned down by Harish diplomatically. She faces the humiliation getting dismissed from the post of principal because of Harish's visits. When she meets poet after losing all hopes to marry her lover, she gets justice for her patient waiting. Her triumph over love in getting married to Harish is movingly described as follows: In the evening the wedding ceremony proceeded smoothly. The poet's parents did the kanya-daan, the seven pheras

were taken, the couple pronounced man and wife. As Virmati rubbed her eyes, watering from the smoke, she knew, rather than felt, that the burden of the past five years had lifted." (*DD*, 202)

It is equally important to note that Virmati has defied the norms of traditional family. It is a serious violation of tradition to love someone else after she has been already betrothed to someone and cancel the wedding fixed up with the fiancé. Virmati does not feel shy to commit violation. She loves the Professor and she coaxes her parents to cancel her wedding with her fiancé. It is a serious offence for a woman to become pregnant before her marriage and to get the aborted. But Virmati commits this offence also. Marrying a married man is a disgrace in the Arya Samaj but Virmati marries a married man, Harish without the approval of her parents. Virmati is a sharp contrast to her mother and there is a suggestion of revolutionary character in Virmati.

The struggle of Virmati does not end in her marriage. On the contrary, while her marriage with Harish relieves her from the stigma of co-wife (mistress), it leads her to another struggle. She anticipates that her parents would not approve her act and her anticipation regarding the reaction of her parents is portrayed thus: "Virmati was sure that neither parents nor grandfather would ever forgive her. The process of rejection that had started with Tarsikka would be completed." (*DD*, 207)

Her anticipation comes true. She visits her one day. After staying with her husband in his house for a few days, she musters courage to pay a visit to her house. Thus she reaches there one day and finds that there is her mother alone in the house. Though she knows that her mother would forgive her, she approaches her mother with tears in her eyes. Her mother's reaction against her is presented as follows:

> "Get out of here! Why bother to come now?' Kasturi's harsh words hit Virmati, and she bent her head, hoping this was just the initial reaction,

> her mother was understandably hurt. "Didn't you hear me?' Virmati remained standing. Kasturi came closer. 'It would have been better if you had drowned in the canal than live to disgrace us like this!" (*DD*, 220)

Her mother goes to the extent of hit her with her chappal, She alleges that she has destroyed their family and brought about shame on their family. In a way, she becomes a victim of expulsion by the members of her family. Her parents are taken aback on learning that she has married the Professor and feel that she has caused disgrace to their family through her marriage. Thus they suspend their correspondence with her in all respects. When her father is killed in the riot, she is blamed that she is responsible for the death of her father. When she visits her house on the day of her father's death, her mother accuses her thus: "Because of you he died. Otherwise is this the age to go?" (*DD*, 239)

Besides, it is stated that he has died without forgiving her. Her grand father also dies of grief over the death of his son the next day. On this occasion, her status in the family of her parents is as good as that of an outcaste and it is reflected in the following as: "Her father had died without forgiving her, and now her grandfather too. Not one her family cared for how she felt. It was clear that they did not want to see her, or have anything to do with her."(*DD*, 210)

She undergoes another kind of ill-treatment in her husband's house. Her mother-in-law receives her with distaste on the day of their arrival from Delhi. Harish's first wife, sister and son exhibit antagonism towards her. Ganga allows neither her son to go to Virmati nor does she allow Virmati to touch him. She deprives her of her serving her husband by way of washing his clothes and cooking food for husband. Besides, she jeers at her at her back. Harish's sister also joins Ganga in the taunt directed at Virmati. However, Harish's mother changes her treatment towards Virmati, when later becomes

pregnant. She takes care of her by way of allowing her to sleep in her room and reciting the *Gita* to the fetus in her womb.

In the meanwhile, she gets the post of principal in a primary school which is located opposite to AS College. Ganga becomes more envious of her than earlier when Virmati becomes pregnant and thus keeps on annoying her in one way or the other. Her complaint to her husband about Ganga's behaviour bears no fruit as he advises her to ignore it. Unfortunately, Virmati undergoes miscarriage and it adds more misery to her.

Harish, who discerns that he can not manage Ganaga and Virmati in one place, decides to send Virmati for studying MA Philosophy in Lahore. He makes arrangement for her accommodation in the small house of his friend in Krishna Nagar. In the course of time, Harish realizes that it is difficult for him to make both ends meet in maintaining two families. Thus he persuades Virmati to return to his house in Amritsar during summer and she complies with him. After summer, she returns to Lahore. In the meantime, the country is facing a lot of communal disturbances in the wake of the partition of the country. Harish's mother feels that it is better for them to return to their village on account of the riots there. Since Harish is not ready to leave his job in Amritsar, his mother along with Ganga, Guddiya, Ganga's son leave for their village paving the way for Virmati to join her husband in Amritsar.

During her stay with husband in Amritsar, many changes take place both in the country and in the life of Virmati. She becomes pregnant again. Her mother makes reconciliation with her and invites her to her house where they feed together the victims of the partition. She give birth to a baby girl with the independence for the country. Hence Virmati suggests to her husband that she should be name 'Bharati' but he rejects that name stating that the country has not attained freedom in the true sense since there is the prevalence of riots, violence and suffering

across the country. Therefore, he christens his daughter 'Ida' which means a new slate.

Virmati has defied her family and its conventions more times than one. It is discernable that there are elements of protest against and violation of the conventions lay down by her community. She pursues her studies against willingness of her parents. She suspends her betrothal and wedding with Inderjit against the wish of her family. She loves the Professor who is already married amidst the protests of her family. She allows the Professor to make love to her and thus becomes pregnant before they are married which is viewed as a serious violation of the tradition. She enters into love marriage with the Professor without the knowledge and approval of her family. But her revolutionary character does undergo a sea-change after the birth of her daughter, Ida. It is evident in the explanation of Ida about her mother's advice to her thus: "That is what she tried to give me. Adjust, compromise, adapt." (*DD*, 256)

There is one more illustration to this effect in the conversation between Virmati and Ida in which Virmati expects her daughter to obey to her father which she herself has not done to her father. The conversation is cited from the novel thus: "Ida refused to show any signs of intellectual brightness. 'There are other things in life,' she told her mother. 'Like what?' asked Virmati.'Like living.' 'You mean living only for yourself. You are disappointing your father." (DD,193)

There is a fine stroke of irony in this instance. Virmati, who has lived herself in choosing education and marriage against the will of her parents and thereby disappointing her parents and Virmati, who was considered to be responsible for the death of her father and whose father and grandfather died without forgiving her, tries to remind her daughter of filial duties. However, this change in her conforms that Virmati ends as a character of compromise.

The social institution called marriage is glorified in the episodes of Kasturi, Lajwanti, Ganga and Swarnalata

in *Difficlut Daughters*. There is also hatred of marriage in the episodes of shakuntala. Virmati's marriage is a protest against the system of arranged marriage and monogamy. Yet she complies with the norms of traditional wife.

In summing up it can be said that Kapur's treatment of love is not like reading Spinoza and smelling of dinner cooking. She has treated love as 'human bondage' extending it to be the lyrical expression in the subjective and sensitive forms. Like the great philosophers of love she has explored the various moods of love. She has hated, scorned, busted, loved and worshipped love in her fascinating pursuits after the affairs of the professor and Virmati. Assessing love as a human ill, but deals with it in a romantic fashion. Overriding the conventional morality she has made love a Shivian life. She has presented love as passion, and a kind of force. She has bases on intellectual analogy. In Virmati and Ganga she has exposed how women's love is not necessarily less pure than man's.

The novel of Manju Kapur voice well the sentiments of women and their self-introspections. Virmati and Ganga are searching for their grounds interestingly from a wrong threshold. All of them fall in love first, and the search for the self-identity becomes the second thought. The facts raised by Manju Kapur are worth research and inquiry and through the exemplary figures, she presents an ideal image of women who amid all thick and thins maintain their chastity and humanity and do not leave anyone destitute.

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13

Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande's 'Women': Trapped in Men's World

Ramesh P. Chavan

Anita Desai is one of the most powerful contemporary Indian novelists in English. She is more concerned with thought emotion and sensation than with action, experience and achievement. Desai's portrayal of man-women relationship has been situational. Man-women relationship seems of particular interest to her for the most of her early novels she writes are of this theme. She concentrates on the predicament of modern women in this male dominated society and destruction at the altar of marriage.

In the light of feminist Critical theory Anita Desai's novels can be examined as the manifest of female predicament. She more ever, represent the 'welcome creative release of the feminine sensibility" (AVKTIANL, 50). *Cry, The Peacock* a tour de force which stands next to *The Serpent and the Rope,* discusses the mind of Maya in feminism frame work.

Feminism goes up into feeling and sensation where as Masculine goes into intuition and thinking. Maya and

Gautam are opposed to each other and both represent the extremities of feminine and masculine principle. Maya feels established and depotentiated even after four years of marriage, Gautam has failed to fecundate. Maya's remarks to Kathakali dancers delineated her detest of the masculine. Maya's relationship with her husband, father and brother Arjuna reflects archetypal feminism Anna Lowry weir examines the feminine sensibility of the novelist and argues:

> "Anita Desai is the vanguard of a new generation of India writers who are experimenting with theme of inner conscious ....she gives her readers valuable insights into the feminine conscious memorable protagonist's"(AL TIM AD, 1-4)

Anita Desai's all young characters crave for women's liberty Maya in Cry, The Peacock who is not mature and intelligent enough complains of being treated as " A wild beast on leash" which induces in her " a humiliating sense of a neglect". Maya is shocked by her brother Arjuna, who is set free and enjoy liberty like "a young hawk that could not be tamed, that fought for its liberty."

Desai's very first novel, *Cry the Peacock* is about Maya, who is unable to relate emotions to her Gautama. Unlike the western tradition, in the Indian middle class families, the couples generally go through arranged marriages and do not choose each other. Though times have changed, the tradition of negotiated marriage is still very much in vague. Maya and Gautama's marriage is one such case where they both are ill matched as a couple. There is absolutely no understanding on the intellectual as well as sensual plane. Maya being the more sensitive of the two is unable to bear the strain of the relation and is driven to insanity by the end of the novel. Maya's psychic problem lies not in the loss as Mrs. Noah's problem is. It is more acute; it is an 'absence' and therefore it is a loss Mrs. Noah can analyse her craving and search for an alternative to sublime her desire, but Maya does

not even have access to the understanding of her desire. She crave for 'contact, companionship, communion' which Gautama with his rigid understanding of the Hindu Philosophy is unable to fathom. So Maya's vacuum does not emanate from something she had possessed and had lost, but from an emptiness which has no chance of being replaced by a fulfilling experience. As her name suggests, she can only survive in a world of illusion. Just as Michele Roberts uses names which reverberate with hidden meanings, Anita Desai too is careful and conscious in her choice of the names of characters:

> In choosing words, names, a writer is of course conscious of all their evocations and connotations. The choice was deliberate because the names had "echoes" I needed to use" (SR,CGFWJT,.40)

If 'Maya' symbolises illusion, Gautama meaning Buddha, stand for Reason and Judgement. Anita Desai is using the names ' Gautama' in a very ironical sense. As her narrative technique reveals, she sympathises with Maya and not Gautama. She is one with maya's understanding of her husband as a "cold rationalist'. For gaining reason and attaining peace of mind, an individual has to go through the process of unreason, conflict and pain. The innocence is always 'Blakean' and so is 'Nirvana'. One cannot attain Nirvana with a virgin soul, untainted, untouched, noncomittant to the sensuous as well as sensual pleasures of life. Hindu philosophy works out reason through trials of darkness. Such juggling with the connotations of darkness and light reminds one of the Saussurean formulas of binary oppositions. There could be embrace of the metaphysical concept of love and detachment and to attain his 'nirvana' only after he was able to rise above his sensual pleasures. Buddhism does not preach "cold rationality", nor does Hinduism. It directs people to surpass physical attraction to conceive love which is benevolent and beneficial.

When Maya speaks of her yearning for "peace that

comes from companion life alone, from brother flesh", she signifies her craving for such love from her husband. Maya lacks the emotional security and longs for the understanding and the sacred communion with her husband, which she never had.

The divide between the husband and wife and their understanding of life is adequately worked out through conversations. Anticipating Maya's rejection of the "logic' of reincarnation, Gautama says o her: You will say-

> "What are we bound to this cycle then, tethered to it? But that fatalism?" ah, but see the logic of it –the perfect logic of it : one incarnation acting upon the other, the action performed in one incarnation bearing fruit in the next, as surely as autumn must follow summer, as surely as the rising tide must ebb"(AD,CP.22).

Maya is horrified by such a cold mechanical and unjust view of life:

> To think- to think that we are to pay, in this life for what we may have done in a past one, to think that we may have to pay horribly, oh horribly for something terrible, something terrible that we might have done- it is terrible".(AD,CP.124)

Gautama's insensitivity and lack of imagination weighs her down. She retreats within her own self denied of sexual love, denied of 'brotherly companionship' even. Her life with Gautama is merely putting up with his dry theorization of religious philosophies. As Maya looks back on her childhood days, she discovers that she was dissatisfied even with the other man in her life, her father. If Gautama forces his philosophies on her, on her father's attitude was that silent resignation and stoicism: "It must be so". Contrasted against such of sterile masculinity, Maya is extremely fertile in her imaginative potential. Her fears, sorrows and frustrations find voice in her sensuous observation of the world around her.

Marital love for Maya is not simply the exploitation of the womanly accomplishments. A woman has so much energy and enthusiasm. A husband considers her as the sole source of enjoyment. A woman ceases to be a woman made of flesh and blood after she is enjoyed as the ordinary people say. She endures the good and bad aspects of her husband. Marriage provides all the happiness under the sun. It is a fixation of all that once belonged to the husband and his family heritage and legacy and the inherited property and belongings. Marriage provides all happiness, the husband lives in the legally allotted and occupied premises of her own house, where she was born and brought up, even if her mother belonged to Kashmir and Malabar, because according to the judgement that is in force a wife's house is the legal property of the husband especially if wife is the eldest daughter of her parents. This is the matriarchal system that prevails all over Kerala. A woman has freedom to keep husband, with her in the house or outside. A legal divorce does not ensure any legal right for the husband to harass his one time wife or prosecute her with any means. Marital love for Maya is her unrequited infatuation and affection which she had been deprived off since her childhood.

Maya, the protagonist of *Cry the Peacock*, is a young girl who is obsessed by a childhood prophecy of disaster that cannot be averted. The story is also one of marital discord imbued with a strong streak of neurotic fantasy on the part of the women and a corresponding phlegmatic and attitude on the part of her husband. She was brought up tenderly by a doting father as "a toy princess in a toy world"(CP, 89). She has been so sheltered and brought up as a privileged person that her husband later accuses her of living her life as a fairy tale:

> What have you learnt of the realities? The realities of common human existence, not love and romance, but living and dying and working all that constitutes life for the ordinary man. You won't

> find it in your picture books; what wickedness to raise a child like that. (CP, 115).

As the story unfolds, we find the tragedy is not due solely to her living in the fantasy world as Gautama, the husband, labels it. Maya's capacity to love another human being, other than her father would be the litmus test of her psychic health. Gautama, the brilliant up coming lawyer has neither the time nor the capability of showing tenderness towards her, at a time when she most needs it, buffeted as she is by the albino's prophecy of disaster and death in her life, four year after her marriage. His failure in the traditional role of a husband, as a protector, acts as a potent catalyst for her collapse.

Maya's quest is not only one woman's quest but the quest of a human being towards some understanding, some sympathy in her predicament. Her only brother had run away from home, her father is on trip to Europe and Gautama, her husband, does not meet her even half way in trust, and affection. The failure of their marriage of minds renders everything doubtful and portentous. The albino who reads her horoscope and predicts death for one the partners in marriage after a married life of four years, hovers constantly in her fevered brain as a concealed dark figure of moral disability that inhabitants her married life , both on the physical and mental levels and prevents consummation and the ordinary fulfilment of motherhood and family life.

Anita Desai has explored different aspects of feminine psyche which also include man-women relationships. Cry, the Peacock is a family play mainly concerned with theme of mental discord between husband, Gautam, and wife, Maya. The Play is about Maya's Cry, for love and relationship in her loveless wedding with Gautama; The Peacock Cry is an implication of Maya's anguished cry for love and life of involvement. Anita Desai has dealt with a sterile woman highly sensitive and emotional, who is married to Gautama a busy, prosperous in his life as

a middle-aged lawyer. The husband is too much engrossed in his own affairs to meet the demand party, temperamental, partly spiritual; of his young wife Gautama's sensibilities are too rough and practical to suit Maya. She is the pampered child of Rai Sahib, and is brought up in an atmosphere of Luxury. She lives to use her own worlds, like 'a toy prince in a toy world'. Albeit Gautama is a faithful husband who loves and cares her in his own way yet Maya is never satisfied and happy Usha Pathania, a noted Critic, remarks: "Marital relationships are established with the explicit purpose of providing companionship however, the element of compares each other is sadly missing in the relationship between Maya and Gautama" (TNAD,' RKG, P.40) The novel exposes an impression of marital incongruity and unhappy conjugal life. As Kohli Points out "No other writer is so much concerned with the life of young men and women in India cities as Anita Desai" (TNAD, RKG, P.43)

The title of this book, Cry the Peacock is about Maya's cries for love. The cry of Peacock symbolises Maya's agony for love and life. Gautama does see no value in anything less than the ideas and theories born of human and preferably male brains. Maya starves for her husband's companionship and spends sleepless nights consuming with this starvation. The thought which ever more impresses her is that his companionship is a necessity. He makes no attempt to take any interest of thing which attracts her. She pines to satisfy her physical starvation and when it is not satisfied, what has she to do? She would lie awake the whole night suppressed by the starvation, she felt not mere by for Gautama but for all that life represented. She began to look upon her relationship with Gautama as a relationship with death. The foreteller albino is merely literary device used to reveal her concealed awe.

Under the emphasis of this owe she becomes insane and argued that since Gautama was not involved with

life and did not care for it, it was unimportant to him whether he was alive for her or not. Only if any one of them was not to live normally she should live because she kept saying it was I who was meant to live. She killed Gautama in a fit of frenzy and soon she avowed and met to her own death. H. M William rightly says that "it is a brilliant Impressionistic novel: the total effect however is one of despair" (CPG, WE P.26)

Anita Desai not only portrays the feminine psyche of a common woman who is under so much of psychic pressure that they cannot be known for insanity but them they are explicitly normal. The first character that comes to our mind is that Maya who is hypersensitive and becomes alienated as she is almost mental wreck. H.M William's approach appears to be apt that "Cry, the Peacock is a disturbing first novel, mostly takes the form of interior monologue delineating the tragic mental breakdown of a young Indian women, Maya" (SB, TSS, P.22) Anna Lowry Weir, a remarkable critic, rightly accesses the character of Maya in terms of man-women relationship through Indian ethos and culture. In this way, in his critical estimation the critic suggests:

> "Maya is an Indian, and thoughts have an Indian ness, despite their disturbed state. She reflects an Indian weather, Indian flora and fauna, Indian religious and mythical figure"(ADIWW,MB.P.56)

Traditionally man has been regarded as a protector, a master, a guardian of woman. The modern educated woman has however started resenting this attitude.

So far man has treated her as a child and she too accepted it mutely. But her new-found identity wouldn't approve of it any more. And herein lies her cause of her suffering. That is, the old habit compels her to accept to be treated as a child, while the realization of her new identity compels her to liberate herself from the age old guardian-child chain. See the agony and the rage of another educated young lady Indu in *Roots and Shadows.*

When Naren declares about his going, Indu reacts as follows:

> "Going? Why did I feel at once like a deserted abandoned child? Why did it always have to be someone else for me? I felt foolishly ridiculously angry, like a pampered child suddenly left on its own, finding out that grown ups have other and more engrossing interests after all" (161).

Gautama also treats Maya as a child in *Cry, the Peacock* and she resents it. At one point both of them are walking together and Maya talks of the flower, Gautama plucks it and hands it to Maya saying, "Who should deny you that?" he said "and smiled at me as to win some child." (121) Then in a debate, Maya says: "And you will think me a tiresome child for it, for showing what you once called my 'third-rate poets' mind." (113). Thus the present- day woman has finally realised that she is not as helpless and dependent as a child. She is as much competent as man. But then old sanskaras shake her new faith and she is struggling to come out of the shackles of such old sanskaras.

Another fact the modern educated young woman has gradually realised is man's wilful over looking of woman's wishes, likes and dislikes. Until the sixties and seventies man alone was looked upon as bread winner and woman was confined only to household. In the modern era, woman too has become a direct money earner. Now she not only earns money, but also does her household work. For instance, Indu is interested in creative writing. She dislikes the routine service job. So one day she asks Jayant whether she should resign. To this he says 'No' because they need money and they had a long way to go. At this Indu's reaction is as follows: To go were-Indu couldn't ask. She goes to work hating it and hating herself. 'Waking everyday and thinking...' I can't go on feeling trapped." (RS,19)

Maya, a young lady is genuinely interested in Kathakali dances, the ballet, etc. So she requests Gautama to take her to the south. To this he says, "If that is your only reason for wanting to go all the way to south. I suggest you to wait till a Kathakali troup come to give performance in Delhi.... It will be less expensive." (CP, 43) Similarly the pet's death shatters Maya beyond measure. And she tells Gautama: "Oh, Gautama, pets mightn't mean anything to you, and yet mean a world to me." (16) This irks him and he says, "You go chattering like a monkey. I am annoyed that I have been interpreted in my thinking." (16).

Vineeta faces the same situation in *Temporary Answers*. Nagendra declares to go to his friend's marriage. At this she says." Then go to reception. Why do you have to go the whole day? I was counting on spending this Sunday with you. You haven't been home the last two Sundays either." (118) But then he asks her to come with him to the marriage ceremony where actually she knows no one. Further Nagendra not only goes to the marriage but from there he straight goes to his parents whom he had visited three days back. Finally when he returns at night Vineeta, his wife mockingly says, "You don't love me at all." At this his curt answer is: "What the hell do you want me to do? Sit here, holding your hand twenty four hours a day." (119) Vineeta only wishes that he should spend some stray Sunday with her, but than that is that.

So far the woman has looked at this sort of attitude and treatment as man's privilege and accepted it with no murmur. But the present-day woman has realised the unjust nature of such an attitude and has started thinking on different lines. For instance Indu, before going back to her home, determines to tell Jayant, "I am resigning my job. That, I would at last do the kind of writing I had dreamt of doing."(RS, 205).

For years she has lived under protection of either parents or husband or her own children. This pattern of life outwardly made her life safe and smooth, but actually

slavish and dependent. Now the new education has awakened her real self. As a result of this she has started thinking of independent and self-reliant. And in order to translate this thinking into reality she has started fighting against her own timid self as well as man's protectoral shell. The fight is tough, but it has set in. Here is Indu, the educated young women, who says, "This is my real sorrow. That I can never be complete in myself....that there was somewhere, outside me, a part of me without which I remained incomplete," (RS, 34). On another occasion she painfully admits, "When I look in the mirror, I think of him." (RS, 54). Indu very much desires to live on her own without any support of Jayant. But "Sometime I wonder if I will leave him one day and live by myself. The only way, in which I can be myself my whole-self again" (RS, 97).

Similar is the condition of Maya who wonders. "Father! Brother! Husband! Who is my saviour and am I in need of one?" (CP, 98). Thus the modern women is striving to be free and self-reliant, but then the timidity and diffidence, the product of the years slavish and protected life pattern, are causing a big hurdle.

Anita Desai's primary concern as a novelist is with sequestered individual living in an abandoned limbo of personal privation. Her fictional world postulates an engaging tussle between the alienated individual and the chaotic milieu. The alienated individual in her novels is delineated to be struggling for socio-psychic emancipation from a physico-moral world. The "solitary being and the lone individual" (TTI, P5) is her sole concern. She deftly explores the emotional ecology of her protagonists who are delineated to be "facing single handed, the ferocious assaults of existence" (TTI, P.5). In her novels she endeavours to appraise the various obsessive stimuli that breed alienation in the life of the protagonists.

As long as the thoughts and feelings of the women in all respects flowed together with those of man's she had the feeling of security and togetherness. Now when

she has started thinking and feeling differently, generated in her a feeling alienated from man. And this alienation has generated in her a feeling of loneliness and emptiness and which she has fought with all her might. Let this statement be made clearer. As long as women mutely accepted and practised the age-old traditions and customs like clearing up "the mess with her bare hands, after each meal", "eating off in the same dirty plate her husband had eaten earlier", getting married and bearing children". Sharing the belief that "a women can't live her life alone," accepting to be "obedient and unquestioning", looking at husband as "a definite article, permanent." Not only for now, but for ever, and so on, she felt secure and had the feeling of togetherness. Now that the new education has gradually made her conscious of the futility of emptiness of the various long- preserved notions and taboos about the women, she has started opposing and breaking them. And this crusade at times makes her feel alone and alienated.

"I intended to study *Roots and Shadows,* which presents the image of women. This novel explores the inner struggle of the protagonist, Indu. She tries to learn the truth about herself, deserting all the shadows that she had thought to be her real self. Indu presents a set of modern women, who are educated and very much in contact with the society, dealing with the critical problems of love, marriage, sex, settlement and individuality. O.P Bhatnagar points out that "the novel deals with a women's attempt to assert her individuality and realise her freedom. It depicts how it brings her into confrontation with family, with male world and society in general" (OPBIWFFSD65)

Akka, the mother-figure in *Roots and Shadows,* dominated the family and became an emblem of authority. She was a childless widow. She treated almost everyone under her guidance. She approves whatever occurs in the house. Until her death, she had maintained her power, her authority over everyone. But Indu, a rebel, often wished to be free and unrestrained. Thus, she is presented

as a model against the women belonging to the older generation. The novelist has presented two groups of women in Indian setup. One group is represented by Akka, Narmada, Sumitra Kaki, Kamala Kaki, Atya, Sunanda Atya. Indu represents the other group. The life of traditional women is nothing" but to get married, to bear children, to have sons and then grandchildren" (RS,128). And ideal women are one who does not have her own independent identity. Indu presents new generation and reviews everything with reason. She explains the ideal of detachment and liberation and tries to achieve them. She tries only to listen to the voice of her conscience and revolts. But, unfortunately, she fails, in all her efforts, miserably either due to the impact of culture and tradition, or fear of stigma, or timidity, or all these combined together.

This new woman is Indu. She looks upon marriage as "system which makes one so dependent". (RS, 117) She considers love to be "a big fraud, hoax, a trap- a process of making one humble and dependent".(RS,173) To her " the sexual instinct", " the maternal instinct," " self Interest," self love," etc.., appear rational and meaningful. She revolts against the concept of monogamy to be observed by women.

Similarly Maya, unlike a conventional woman, fearlessly fights to assert her point of view. She has the courage to tell Gautama: "You know nothing of me and of how I can love. How I want to love. How it is important to me. But you, you have never loved."(CP, 112) In another situation, Gautama wants Maya to listen to him, but then She says 'No' and further adds, "You listen to me tonight" (CP, 113) this is the voice of the new women. However, while fighting against the established old system, there are occasions when all of them suffer from the feeling of loneliness and alienation which is natural as they are passing through a twilight period. Unhesitatingly the modern educated young women's crusade against years of slavery, suffering and suppression is serious one.

However, in the process of this crusade, we see her suffering from certain weakness and complexes which have been very honestly highlighted by the Indian women novelist. The first weakness, she suffers can be summed up in what Pope has said of Addison, viz." willing to wound and yet afraid to strike." For instance, Indu firmly declares: "Now I would go back and see if that home could stand the scorching of honesty". And in the next breath she confesses: "Nevertheless I knew I would not tell Jayant about Naren and me, for that was not important".(RS.205).

Maya in Cry, the Peacock internally rebels against Gautama or his autocratic and selfish behaviour. She knows the fact , " In his world, there were vast areas in which he would never permit me and he couldn't understand that I could even wish to enter them, foreign as they were to me"(CP, 104). Thus there are physically together, but emotionally far apart, she hates it, represents it and yet prefers to live with him. She doesn't have courage to leave him and live the life of her choice as Mahadevi Varma, the great Hindi poetess, did. This new woman has become conscious of her destination, viz.to liberate herself from the male dominance. But she has not been able to shake off her fear. What she urgently needs is "to live without fear....fear of being unloved, misjudged, misunderstood, displeasing, without the fear of failure."(RS.191).

The protagonist, Indu, learns more about Akka, her past life, her concern and her distresses. Akka's traumatic married life comes before us when she uses her will in not allowing her husband's concubine to see him at his death-bed. Here she realizes what her roots are-as an independent women and a writer, and what the shadows are-a daughter, a mother and a commercial writer.

Bhatnagar says: " In the end, comes realization that freedom lies in having the courage to do what one believe is the right thing to do and determination and the tenacity to adhere to it. That alone can bring harmony in

life"(OPBIWFFSD,88). But ultimately, she fails to do so here either for fear of failure or because of fearfulness. She herself is a sinner and deceiver and thus crates the cause of her own sufferings.

The paradox of her predicament is that she is not pleasant with Jayant, but at the same time, she cannot lives sans him. She has got fulfilment when Naren tries to make love with Indu, kind of fulfilment.

Thus, Mrs. Desai has presented her protagonist, Indu as a paradigm of the new class of Indian women who raised a number of basic questions regarding modern women who are rooted and shaped by the soil of India but influenced by the west. The traditional Indian women suffered, submitted, and adjusted themselves to the circumstances but now they are changed persons who are aware of their status, her quest, her identity, her individuality, her place, and her role in the family and society. Indu represents this sort of women. Now there is a question before the society whether to desert deny her to concede and cooperate with her in her endeavours to

> In quest for independence she has developed certain complexes as well. One such complex is to look even at the womanly instinct as a sign of dependence. The fact is that a woman is basically a woman as well as a person. As a woman she definitely needs man and vice versa. But as a person she can legitimately claim to be free and independent. However, in our social set up her two identities, viz, a woman and a person have been rolled into one, viz., only a woman, and this has led to the confusion.

To Indu even wifely attachment for Jayant makes her wonder: "Am I on way to becoming an ideal woman? A women who sheds her 'I', who looses her identity in husband's" (RS, 54) the fact is that the normal life with all its shades of attraction, love, hates, tiffs, etc. has to

go on. It is only when some deliberate injustice is done to her or some basic right is wilfully violated or snatched from her, she has to rise, stand and fight paying any price. Another weakness that has crept into this new woman is the overdose of suspicion and doubt. This makes her not only see certain design or some selfish motive in man's intentions and behaviour, but see it being magnified. When Maya accuses Gautama of treating as a tiresome child and of calling her as third-rate poetess's mind, he sincerely denies them. But she overlooks that and asserts. "You did, and you believe it now, because I love you."(CP.113) So is Indu. She starts suspecting the intention of all men. When Naren asks her what she expects of Jayant, she says, "I expect nothing from him. Not from him, nor from any one else" (RS.174). The modern woman in her struggle for liberty and equality can't wink at the fact that as the build submission is undesirable, so is the unwarranted suspicion.

According to Women's writers female could "neither assert, demand, nor proclaim", (RS, 146) and an ideal women is one who" shed her 'I', who loses her identity in her husband's"(RS,54) According to them a women has to " adopt herself to her circumstances and environment" and "greedy, devious, and unscrupulous."(RS,146) Against this ages old set up of women's life is placed the new one presented by Indu, an educated modern young women. She has visions and revisions of her ideal of detachment and freedom and tries to achieve them. She tries to listen to the voice of her conscience revolts. But in all her efforts fails miserably either due to the impact of the sanskar or fear and timidity or these together.

Indu is not only an educated young women, she is highly sensitive too. She starts aspiring to become independent and complete in her self. But then she finds dominant Akka and even the family to be an hindrance in achieving her goal of attaining independence and completeness. Akka doesn't allow her to meet the boy in the lone corner of the library and speaks ill of her

mother .Indu leaves the house and later marries Jayant, a man of her own choice. Thus she leaves one house and enters another to have independence, completeness and joy. But soon she realises the futility of her search. In her own words: "Jayant and I...I wish I could say we have achieved complete happiness. But I cannot fantasize."(RS, 14).

As for achieving completeness in herself, she speaks thus:

> "This is my real sorrow, that I can never be complete in myself. Until I had met Jayant, I had not known it ...That there was Somewhere out side me, part of me without which I remained incomplete. Then I met Jayant. And lost the ability to be alone" (RS, 34)

Indu ridicules Atya's ideas of not saying one's husband name as it shortens his life and circumstance of Tulsi and praying for husband's life. But then she realizes that she is not different from Atya-like women as she also wishes "that Jayant should be with her. Always all the time, forever" (RS,36) Only her reasons for thinking so are different. She had also aspired to assert her 'I'. But after marriage it occurs to her that whatever she was doing, viz.., looking in mirror, dressing, undressing all, she was doing for Jayant. And this bitter fact of shedding her 'I' her identity in her husband's frightens her. The paradox is that she is not happy with Jayant, but can't live without him. She has achieved completeness with Jayant, but she doesn't want it.

At one point in the novel when Naren tries to makes love with her, she declares: "I'm essentially monogamous. For me, it's one man one man alone" (RS, 89) But later offers herself to him twice. And then the question hangs how she will view this act of adultery. After the act, she goes to bed, but then deliberately avoids sleeping as that would erase " the intervening period and what happened between Naren and her"(RS,167) She thinks it no sin, no

crime to make love with other person and wonders: " why did we make such monstrous thing out of this ? she feels exalted to think, there was nothing I couldn't do" (RS, 169) But this bravado is short lived. The next day she starts thinking of the enormity of what she had done. Her mind is projected thus:

> "Adultery ...What nuances of wrong doing...no, it needs the other stronger word...What nuances of sin the word carries. I will now brood on my sin, be crushed under a weight of guilt and misery" (RS,170)

Later on, she starts musing over the reasons for giving Naren her body. And further her mind on the matter of 'sin' and right wrong can be seen as under:

> "Apart from wronging Jayant? Wronging Jayant? I winced at The thought. But had I not wronged Jayant even before this? By pretending, by giving him spurious coin instead of the Genuine kind? I had cheated him of my true self. That, I thought, is dishonourable, dishonest, much more than this, What I have done with Naren".(RS,188)

As for love, she doesn't believe in it. To her there is no such thing as love, at least in real life. Of course it may exist in books and movies. According to her, "It is a big fraud", it is not "the greatest" and "the only thing" in life. And if one believes in such statements, he or she gets trapped and becomes humble and dependent, Naren asks her if the concept of love is false then what is the truth. Her answer is follows:

> "The sexual instinct....That is true. The maternal instinct... That is true too. Self interest, self love...They are the basic Truths, you remember Devadas? I saw it with some friends. They sobbed when he died for love. But I could have puked. A grown man moaning and crying for love! God! How disgusting!"(RS,173)

As a child she was told to be obedient and un questioning, meek and submissive simply because she was a female. Then she had laughed at them and sworn she would never pretend to do what she was not. But after marriage, to her great shock and surprise, she found that Jayant had not only expected her to submit but taken her submission for granted. And she too submitted, surrendered to him step by step in the name of love. But then she realizes that it was not love but because she didn't want conflict. And we see her pathetic state being revealed thus:

> "The hideous ghost of my cowardice confronted me as I thought of this....That I had clung tenaciously to Jayant, to my marriages, not for love alone, but because I was afraid of failure. I had to show them that my marriage, that I, was a success.....And so I went on lying, even to myself...which meant that I, who had despised Devadas for being a coward, was the same thing myself. I had killed myself as surely as he had done"(RS, 175)

According to Indu one should listen to the dictates of one's own conscience and be true to oneself in speech as well as action. And unfortunately she herself has failed to do so either for the fear of failure or timidity. This fact makes her see herself as a similar as inner and causes deep suffering. Another fondly cherished dream, ideal of Indu is to attain the state of "detachment". Her mind keeps harping on this theme of detachment and loneliness. However, she wonders whether she would ever reach the stage of "no passion, no emotions, an unruffled placidity" (RS, 118) She introspects and finds herself attached and involved in many ways. She expects others to show concern for her. On one occasion her father talks of having met Jayant. Naturally she asks him how was Jayant. And he says: "Oh wonderful, wonderful, wonderful"(RS, 100) At this she wishes she would have murdered her father

for his air of " cheerful candour". What she expécted to hear was that Jayant was "pining for her". Similarly, when Naren says that he is going back to his work, the word " going" ring like a bell and makes her feel like " a deserted abandoned child." (RS, 161)She feels very much "attachment". As for herself she painfully, quietly, quietly accepts her failure to shake off the feelings of involvement towards the end of the novel:

> "Now, felt clean, as if I had cut away all the unnecessary, uneven edges of me. And free. But not detached. I would, I know, never hanker after detachment any more. The very word brought back Naren's eyes as he lay on the grass near the tank. Detachment....it was for the dead, not the living". (RS, 205)

She struggles hard to understand the actual cause destroying her married life. One way she finds it to be the ideas of "self surrender" and self abnegation." She loves her husband "too much" and "too passionately,"(RS,92) and is ashamed of it . She feels her sense of certainty, confidence and assurance being destroyed in the presence of Jayant. And when she talks of such feeling to him, he would call it "nonsense". (RS, 116). And here is the crux of the problem. Jayant never bothers to understand what she really wanted, what she really felt about things. In brief there is no real communication between them. Then, should she leave her husband? She does toy with this idea of leaving jayant and be "herself", her "whole self". (RS, 97) But then the question why? And the answer "too much love for her husband.". But the fact is that it is not the love but the lack of "courage" and "steadfastness" (RS, 165) this is the main trouble with Indu. She is willing to wound but afraid to strike. As a result, instead of leaving Jayant, she goes back to him with the vain hope that things might change.

One can surely see the continuation of failure as her new efforts is still rooted in timidity and dishonesty. The

old house, holding a big family of over twenty members of diverse natures headed by Akka, represents the traditional Indian life governed by old culture, custom, ritual and all that. But to Indu it turns out to be a "caged place". Consequently, she rebels and quits it at the age of eighteen. After ten years, she again comes back when sent for by Akka. To the old Uncle, this house and family gives it s members 'a background, an anchor, something to hold on to' (RS, 114) But Indu looks upon the houses as "a trap" and family" a large amorphous group of people with conflicting interests". But then the irony is that house and voice, the sounds, the smells, the members, etc., of this house have become part and parcel of her life, her existence. She hated Akka but then steps into her larger chappals. Finally, she agrees to dispose of the house as it had been a trap, binding her to past. She thinks that the dispose of the house will make her feel "clean" and "free"(RS, 204) But could she be really free? Could she shake off shadows of the house and family? A big No, the house is sold, demolished and the family members scatter. But now, the Indu sees a recurring dream- real and concrete- offering that very house, those very family members. Towards the end of the dream, she sees a bus. She gets into it and then realizes that she had left someone behind and cries to stop the bus but in vain.

Thus the novelist has very exquisitely highlighted the inner struggle and sufferings of the new class of Indian women through the character like Indu. She has raised many basic questions relating to the educated modern, sensitive, young women rooted in and shaped by the Indian customs, culture and tradition, on the one hand, and the scientific acknowledge from the west, on the other. When the Indian woman was uneducated, illiterate, ignorant, she was hailed as a pativrata, a sati, and an honourable woman and so on. Now she has started becoming aware of stirrings of her conscience, her quest, her individuality, her place and role in the family and society.

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14

Self Assartion in the Novels: Cry, the Peacock, Fire on the Mountain, Roots and Shadows. That Long Silence of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande

Savit S.

For centuries human experiences have been synonymous with the masculine experience, which made the collective image of humanity. One sided and incomplete. Woman has not been defined as a subject in her own right, but merely as an entity that concerns man either in his real life or in his fantasy life. The Indian Society believes that the men have the power and cultural hegemony in the society. A peculiar feature of the Indian society is that men defend maleness and consider women not manly which is not basically human. Women are marginalized through cultural institutions and religious rituals. All through the ages she has been continued to home. The ever obedient into suffering woman who ended her life in self immolation remains the dominant femininerchy type. The dharma of the Hindu Woman has always been

not exist. Socially woman's voice became mute, the term silence is a part of the constitution of female identity that subjectivity is crucial factor to women. As Sophocles Says "Silence gives the proper grace women"[1]. Women speak on sufferings in the partriarchal order. That is why the culture may prefer than to be silent. The concept of silence recurs in women's writings. Women writers have proved themselves as silent protesters. In Indian English novelist women novelist have made a significant contribution. Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande contributed much to the Indian fiction.

They have sensitively treated typical Indian theme and portrayed contemporaries middle class women rare competence. One can see their novels have something more fundamental than a social motif. In Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande projects the traditional image of a woman. But as times changed, the portrayal became realistic with a thrust on her sense of frustration and alienation. The characters created by them, like their creator were torn apart by the conflicting forces of tradition and modernity. The crisis of value adaptation and attachment with family and home pulled them asunder. The plight of the working woman is still worse, aggregated by her problems of marital adjustment and quest, for assertion of her identity. In this inner conflict of identity both novelist have similar problems. The novelist's however, has generally concentrated on the plights and problems of educated women mostly with the urban base.

The protagonists of Shashi Deshpande's novel's are depicted as more intelligent and capable women than men. All her novels are in the first person narration, which naturally express the feminine point of view.

They react to the out moded traditions and superstitions which tend to impinge upon their personality. They are against arranged marriages and are inclined towards sex freedom.

Where as Anita Desai, portrays sensitive kind of the characters to carry out a meaningful existence for

themselves. The novelists delineation of protagonist's unhappiness and her implicit philosophical approach for cantering their deep-seated despair are the two poles within which characters moves. Antia Desai chooses to reveal her characters in their mental dilemma that permeates their inner and outer reality. Swept along by the eternal flux of life, they are buffeted by the exigencies of this dilemma and desperately seek for ways and means to comprehend the disillusioning and frustrating aspects of life. They associate self-fulfillment not with material desires.

Desai's novel's have two thematic frameworks. The struggle between the attitudes of attachment and detachment and—the search for identity are two important motifs that shed significant tight on the dilemma of her protagonists. Caught between conflicting attitudes and fragmented identifies, her characters seek to preserve their individual autonomy by adopting a singular approach to life. In the process they limit themselves within a uni-dimensional understanding of life.

Both the novelist concentrated much on the problem of identity. In other words, as Dorothy Spencer has rightly pointed out "It would be worthwhile, I believe, to make a study of the Indian woman in fiction. In her roles as mother, wife and sister. she figures very largely in these novels and short series, it is my serious impression that she appears less frequently as daughter".[2]

It is true because all women novelist started their writing career after marriage and they have studied the Indian social hierarchy. A similar statement was given by Meenakshi Mukherjees. The women writers were less concerned with the larger social world than a strict fidelity to the individual vision of their central characters."[3] Their characters are not engaged in matters of survival purely economic terms but try to cope with the very assault of existence itself.

Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande's fictions reflects the turmoil of modem existence with its divergent

demands and pressures by delineating the crisis of human personality and human relationships. This is confined within the parameters for home and family. Self-fulfillment is a strong motivating force in both the novelists.

Maya of Cry, the Peacock, Nanda Kaul of Fire on the Mountain, Jaya of That Long Silence, Saroja of Roots and Shadows have their own theories of life, and with great sensitivity and insight, the novelists conveys them to us, with all their inconsistencies fallacies, limitations, intuitive visionary flashes and concluding premises are exposed. Anita Desai's novels thus foregrounds, the 'self', as the centre of the empirical experience is crucially involved in this search and fulfillment. In her novel Cry, the Peacock, the crisis of identity is main theme. Maya, as her name indicates, is attached to this world in full measure, while her lawyer husband is nothing but a picture of detachment. He ridiculed Maya's attachment with the artefacts her father had presented to her. The Urdu couplets being recited in the party touched the heart of Maya so much that she went out to join that party but she felt herself so much out of place in the male assemblages that she has to retreat immediately. Gautama turned his back to her and told one of his friends in the party that Urdu poetry appeared blissful because it was related to the past. Maya was dismayed to see that Gautama was not prepared to allow women to share in human friendlines or companionship "In his world there were vast areas in which he would never permit me, and he could not understand that I could ever wish to enter them, foreign as they were to me. On his part, understanding was scant, love was meager[4] the modern women wants an equal place with man in all walks of life, as she is educated and awake. It is criminal to restrict her within the four walls of the house. The woman of today is not merely an appendages of man or subordinate to man meant only to satisfy sexual urge of man.

In Shashi Deshapande's "That Long Silence" Jaya was the name given to her by her father who proudly said that it stood for victory which he wished for her father wanted to groom her for higher attainments.

R. Mala writers. They (The Dark Hoslds No. Terrors, Roots and shadows and That Long Silence) deals with the Indian Woman in dishormany with her sexual, cultural and natural roles[5]. Similarly, Keki Daruwala Calls the novel" One long rumination on relationships[6].

It is true in the novel That Long Silence" The atmosphere of Jaya's in laws houde was strictly traditional and she married without a murmur. Mohan, the bride-groom, change her name to Suhasini, as is the custom and Suhasini's models are mythological figures like, Sita, Savitri and Gandhari. She accepts that a husband and wife are like a pair of bullocks yoked together and it is more comfortable for them to move in the same direction. She has also accepted her aunt's statement that a husband is like a sheltering tree. Suhasini has become a house-proud woman. She is like the Sparrow in the story of the crow and the sparrow" Staty at home, look after your babies, keep out the rest of the world and you are safe. That poor idiotic woman Suhasini believed in this (p. 17). The analogy of husband and wife being like a pair of bullocks, or the husband being like a sheltering tree or the wife being an extremely narrow-minded, egoistic sparrow suggests that they do not live as truly human.

"When people are treated as things and come to regard themselves as things that an be managed, controlled, shaped, and exploited, they are prevented from living in truly human manner"[7]. Mohan consider his wife like this.

During Jaya's first pregnancy, when the smell of oil and spice had made her sick, she asked Mohan to cook and she rather naively added," I, am sure you cook well. After all your mother was a cook" (p. 81).

No woman would ordinarily say such to her husband.

Mohan denied angrily that she was one. Mohan speaks as though the profession of cooking is something to be ashamed of only a prig would find it so. He apparently thanks that the respectability of his present position would diminish if it came to be known that his mother had been cook.

The search of identity or the crisis in Anita Desai novels become identity is a quest that has social psychological and metaphysical connotations. In the transitional Indian Society, affected by Western Ideas of individual autonomy, each Individual dreams of personal achievement to enhance his own identity. The Myriad pressure operating on human begins have resulted in psychic traumas and fragmentation. The individual needs mental strength to assert personal autonomy in the face of social pressures and regulatory forces. Desai's restless individuals, caught between the claims of attachment and detachment. He characters feel that involvement erodes their personal identity and subjects them to the unending round of duties and obligations without affording them any personal commitment and choice. Nanda Kaul who occupies centre stage because her predicament revolves around consciously sought detachment and unconsciously desired involvement and this conflict between attachment and detachment has been revealed to be a key concern with the novelist. In Fire on the Mountain too, the tragic dimension of seemingly common place individuals and the undercurrents that permeate every consciousness are highlighted. It revealed like this.

"Getting up at last, she went slowly round to the back of the house and leant on the wooden railing on which the yellow rose creeper had blossomed so youthfully last month but was now reduced to an exhausted mass of grey creaks and groans again. She gazed down the gorge with its gashes of red earth, its rocks and gullies and sharply spiked agaves, to the Punjab plains....." (p. 17).

For Nanda Kaul, self- fulfillment consciously lies in avoidance of all contact in cutting herself off from all

stress - producing situations. As the novel reveals however, this only proves to be self-deluding and consequently self destructive effort. Nanda Kaul's concern and commitment to her social work are a manifestation of her abilities to adjust to the demands of time. Her problems are real and her existence a real struggle and this highlights the self created aspect of Nanda Kaul's situation, whose reactions to her husband's infidelity have negatively coloured her relationship with everybody. She is flexible against the rigidity of her friends attitude. Yet, she too is destroyed because internally she is despair and desperate love of control. She has faced the disillusionment's of life bravely, but lacks dignity and a sense of equilibrium. In the symbolic frame work of the novel, Raka becomes the agent of reality and detraction. Symbols are a helpful means of Comprehending and making use of the non-rational and intuitive realms of functioning[8] and this novel abound with symbolic association Raka with her natural rejection of constructing and brustalizing human relationship perceive the grim actuality of the old ladies playing the game of old age. The issue of identity is complex one and includes both constitutionally given factors as well as acquired traits. The word identity subsumes within itself both internal and external aspects consisting of the self or the Freudian' ego' that is the core combination of inherent temperamental and instinctive traits, personality, defined by Gordon Alport, the renowned psychologist as; the dynamic organization with in the individual of those psychological systems that determine his characteristics behaviour and report"[9]. This kind of behavior expressed uniquely Anitha Desai's fiction, Indian context women have redesigned role, which does not allow any room for Individualism, identity and assertion, Anita Desai talk of women.

Young people with independent attitudes cannot find the atmosphere here congenial. 'They want to strike out on their own. Indus find strange that, the wife must not utter her husband's name: if she does, his life-span will

be shortened: if she goes round the tulsiplant, it will be lengthened. Some of them eat food from unwashed plates with their husbands have used. If you utter the name of Rama, the soul of the dead will go to heaven quickly. The wife's dying before her husband is to be considered good fortune. When Saroja wanted to learn music" Akka put her foot down".

What....learn music from strange man! Sit and sing is front of strangers! Like those women? Are we that kind of family? Isn't it enough for you to sing one or two devotional songs, one or two aarti Songs? (p. 55) The ideal woman is one who will ink her personality in her husband's. The one custom against which Indu has firmly rooted prejudice is arranged marriages. Speaking about the prospective bride groom of Mini Kaka declares. "He has two legs, two feet arms, two eyes, two ears. So what it he's a little dark? So what if he is not tro bright? (p. 52) may be the boy is a little ugly may be a little stupid but everything else is fine. The family is good its known to us, they have money, She will be quite comfortable" (p. 56) Mini herself realistically asks, " what choice have! Indu? (P- 137)

Indu feels sorry for the helplessness of Mini and of thousands of other girls. She try to remember a concept of an ideal woman one who loses her identity in her husband's. But that is exactly what happened to her. She dresses to please him. When I look in the mirror, I think of Jayant. When I undress I think of him. Always what he wants, what he would like.... isn't these anything I want at all? Have I become fluid, with no shape, no form of my own? At that movement a savage truth had stared me in the face without wants there is no T (P-54).

But Jayant is just the opposite....."He too expected me to submit. No, Not expected. He took it for granted that I would" (p. 174) she submitted because she was afraid of failure.

There was a certain amount of incompatibility of temperament between them. "It's more like.....like.....we

are on different levels....He chooses his level. And I..... I try to choose the one he would like me to be on. It humiliates me" (p. 90).

Indu's search for self or search for self-identification or a quest for the self, all of which man being honest fovith ourself. An Individual is a conglomeration of traits mental and physical of which a trait or two may dominate, which we call him personality refers to that trait of the Individual which is most representative of that person. That is what he actually is. Into the forming of that personality have a one influences or reactions to various things, incidents, what he has learnt at school and college and unlearnt in life. Some of these influences will have been even unconscious. The deep delaying into the self to find out what it prove to be.....and to indeed is..... a torturous. Course. He may discover likes and dislikes of which he was never aware. He may discover that the person he hated is the person he is most like. This show unraveling itself is the essence of the process which will make one with oneself. P. Ramamoorthy writes: "The Novel (Roots and Shadows) gains its feminist stance in Indu's exploration into herself.[10] The critic goes too far in implying that self-exploration is a feminist activity. Cannot women who are not feminists undertake thus activity? Are they not interested in it? Or is it a feminist monopoly from which men are excluded? HaMhis search for identity a gender? There is a well - known' Vachana of Goggawe,

If a person gets breasts and long hair, we call her a women: If a person gets beards and mustache, We call him a man, But know this, the soul within is neither feminine nor masculine;

During and at the end of the process of self identity, the person will also arrive at certain values which, in the care of Deshapande's protagonists, happen to be existential humanistic.

Both Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande portrayed

sensitive troubled characters desired to carve out a meaningful existence for themselves. They are basically feminists voices of their female characters are not mute. Maya, Nanda Kaul, Jaya, Saru reacted to the out moded Indian traditions. Like other Indian feminists Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande responded properly. Women in their novels revolt against the tradition.

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15

Image of Feminism in Shashi Deshpande's 'Roots and Shadows'

Dr. Vijay F. Nagannawar

Shashi Deshpande's novels deal with the image of women in general and, at the same time, tries to explain how the changes have taken place in women through the centuries, laying more stress on the 20th century changes. The writer with most sustained achievement in feministic fiction, she has written eight novels, six collections of short stories, and four children books. Her writing is clearly part of Indian literature, and emerges from her rootedness in middle class Indian society. Understatement is the hallmark of her work; nor Maharajahs, tiger hunts and holy men in her work.

Shashi Deshpande's novels are concerned with a women's quest for self; an exploration into the female psyche and an understanding of the mysteries of life and the protagonist's place in it. Deshpande began her writing with short stories that later developed to novel writing. *The Legacy(1972),* first collection of short stories, is now prescribed for the graduate students in Colombia University. Other collections of her short stories are: *It*

was Dark, The Miracle, and *It was Nightinagale.* Five novels that go to her credit are: *Roots and Shadow(1983)* won the Thirumathi Rangammal prize for the best novel of India: *Dark Holds no Terror(1980)* has been translated into German and Russian languages; *If I Dies Today(1982), Come up and Be Dead(1883): and That Long Silence(1988)* which mark the image of women and then quest for "selves". The traditional Indian women suffer, submit and adjust themselves to the circumstances.

The women novelists like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, RuthPrawar Ihabvala have, in their words, portrayed this aspect of Indian women's life without having the first hand experience of it. Shashi Deshpande has projected this aspect of Indian women with more sensitivity and instinctive understanding as she belongs to this category, in the sense that, unlike other women writers, she is born and brought up on this soil, got her education in this category, in this country itself and wrote about India. Shashi Deshpande's novels deal with the Indian middle-class" women suffering, frustration, social agitations, and their stillness as a means of communication. Now we can see how the world looks at women and her roles are presented by the society. Our society characterises women as ideally sympathetic, gentle, warm, passive and depended. Domestic life and the work patterns evince the concept that women should be subordinate to and dependent on man. The great philosophers who have immensely contributed to the existing values of life have paradoxically treated women as an object to be used by man. A woman is "God's second mistake", said Nietzsche. To Aristotle, women is an inferior to man.

The protagonist of *Roots and Shadows* is a young woman who has rebelled against her authoritarian and traditional joint family. Indu left home as a teenager to study in big city, and is now a journalist; she has married the man of her choice. But she realises that her freedom is illusionary; she has exchanged the orthodoxy of the village home for the conversations of the "smart young

set" of the city, where material well- being has to be assured by sacrificing principles, if necessary, Indu returns to the family home after an absence of twelve year when her great -aunt, a childless widow dies, leaving her money to Indu. As the heroine takes charge of her legacy, she comes to realise the resilience of the village woman she had dismissed as weak.

G.S. Amur has aptly remarked: "women's struggle, in the context of contemporary Indian society, to find and preserve her identity as wife, mother and, most important of all, as human being is Shashi Deshpande's major concern as a creative writer, and this appears in all her important stories".(SD,TLO,10) For her portrayal of the predicament of middle-class educated Indian women, their inner conflict and quest for identity, is- sues pertaining to parent-child relationship, marriage and sex, and their exploitation and disillusionment, Deshpande may be called a feminist, she talked thus to Geetha Gangadharan:

> "Yes, I would. I am a feminist in the sense that, I think, we need to have a world, which we should recognise as a place for all of us human beings. There is no superior and inferior, we are two halves of one species. I fully agree with Simone de Beauvoir that 'the fact that we are human, is much more important than our being men and women'. I think that's my idea of feminism".(GG,DOP,11)

Deshpande is against categorisations. She doesn't want her writing to be called feminist writing. Many books are being written for women, by woman and studied in the Women's studies departments. She dislikes this 'women's lib' separating women's writing for it is self-defeating.

Roots and Shadows comes out with its feministic approach in Indu's exploration into herself. It also moves beyond feministic boundaries into a realisation of the predicament of human existence. Indu traverses the road

of self-realisation and her destination is the point of comprehension of the mystery of human life. The struggle of such women gives shape and meaning to their individual existence in a sexist society. It culminates in a crisis and ends in a compromise. New bonds replace the old. Ultimately comes the realisation that freedom lies in a world beyond the corporeal and that the courage to do what is conscientiously the right thing to do and the determination and tenacity to stick to it alone can bring in harmony. Women like Indu and Saru are divided in themselves because they fail to synthesis their professional and private lives, and also because they often subscribe to the Indian idea of womanhood. Both of them have similar predicament in life. Having a deep-seated contempt for the suppression faced at home, they leave respective parental house, get married to men of their choice in a gesture of rebellion and find marriage to an entrapment. Often they try to take shelter in their ancestral homes but fail to adopt themselves to its harrowing milieu. Through self-realisation they realise the basic truth of human existence. Their painful and stifled struggle ends with assertion of their individuality. Deshpande's women like Saru and Indu seek marriage as an alternative to the bondage created by the parental family. The simple need to be independent eventually becomes a demand of the inflated ego and takes shape as the love powers over others. She resents the role of a wife with the hope that her new role will help her in winning her freedom. This parental home, a symbol of tradition in the world of values, has little relevance for Shashi Deshpande's women who breathe the air of rituals that obstruct the growth of a woman as an autonomous self. The feeling of homelessness is indicative of inner disintegration. This leads to tension and disharmony both internal and external.

Elsewhere also, Shashi Deshpande has made it absolutely clear that she has nothing to do with feminism in the narrow sense. In an interview to Ashvini Sarpeshkar

Tondon, for example, she said: "I do not like to be branded this or that because life is more complex than that. My enduring concern is for human relationships. I certainly do not think my novels are a man versus woman issue at all." (WF,22). Being a woman herself, she sympathises with women, and, "if others see something feminist in my writings", she told an interviewer, "I must say that it is not consciously done. It is because the word for women is like that and I am mirroring the world."(TSO, 6) Deshpande does admit the influence of the Western feminist writers, but only "to a small extent". As she told M.D. Rita:

> "One never knows what influences one as a writer. I have read a lot of feminist novelists, and understand what they are trying today easily. However, I began reading feminist writing only recently, while my writing has reflected feminist ideas right from the start". (EW,27)

We have to consider Deshpande's concerns for Indian woman in this light because arbitrary appellations and dragging her work to the fold of militant feminism of the Western variety would be unjust.

Feminism emerged in the Western world as a movement in support of the same rights and opportunities for women as for men. Feminism means,

> "...both the awareness of women's position in society as one of disadvantage or inequality compared with that of men and also a desire to remove those disadvantages" (HS,IWS, 3)

Deshpande has portrayed the new Indian woman and her dilemma, her efforts to understand herself and to preserve her identity as wife, mother and, above all, as a human-being in the tradition bound, male-dominated Indian society.

Shashi Deshpande's novels contain a lot of material for feminist thought: woman's sexuality, the gender role

self-discovery etc. But she can be called a feminist only in a specific sense. In an interview given to Lakshmi Holmstrong she said:

> "I now have no doubts at all in saying that i am a feminist. In my own life, I mean. But not consciously, as a novelist I must also say that my feminism has come to me very slowly, very gradually, and mainly out of my own thinking and experiences and feelings. I started writing first, and only then discovered my feminism. And it was much later that I actually read books about it"(W,F,25)

According to Deshpande, no amount of theorising will solve women's problems-specially in the Indian context. She has further remarked: "But to me feminism isn't a matter of theory; it is difficult to apply Kate Millett or Simone de Beauvoir or whoever to the reality of our daily lives in India... I always try to make the point now about what feminism is not, as to say that we have to discover what it is in our own lives, our experiences. And I actually feel that a lot of women in India are feminists without realising it"(WF ,26)

This is a highly sensible approach, and found in almost all her novels especially as in *Roots and Shadows* which deals with "a woman's attempt to assert her individuality and realise her freedom. It depicts how it brings her into confrontation with the courage to do what one believes is the right thing to do and the determination and the tenacity to adhere to it".[8] That alone can bring harmony in life.

Roots and Shadows can be called a novel which explores the inner struggle of Indu, who represents a set of modern women who are educated and are very much in contact with the society, dealing with the critical problems like love, sex, marriage, settlement and individuality. As O.P. Bhatnagar says: "The novel deals with a woman's attempt to assert her individuality and

realise her freedom. It brings her into confrontation with family, with the male world and society in general." (OPB,IW,45)

The story revolves around Indu who broke away from her family out of resentment and married for love in order to assert her freedom. The four generations of the family lived together in the ancestral house built years ago by Indu's Great-grandfather. It was an ancient family over which Akka ruled like an inconsiderate tyrant, ruthless and dominating. Akka, who refused to go the hospital simply because she did not know which caste the doctors and nurses belonged to, and, who was so dominating that she could reduce Kaka to a "red-faced stuttering school boy by her venomous tongue", even after he had become a grand-father himself.

Living in the family was so close, so entangled with one another, that if anyone moved, the other was bound to get hurt. Therefore, an undercurrent of tension was always present even during times of great rejoicing intrigues, jealousies, rivalries, barbed tongues; malicious words-all formed a part of these families with everybody complaining against, blaming and envying everyone else. Thus there were many diverse pulls and conflicting feelings.

Right from her childhood, Indu had seen that women occupied a secondary place in the family. As a child she had been told to be obedient and unquestioning; as a girl she had been told to be weak and submissive. When she had gathered the courage to ask why, she had got the answer that this was the only way a female could live and survive. She had to accept everything, even defeat, gracefully, and her intelligence was only a burden for her and she is not supposed to think.

Indu, an educated young woman, is very sensitive. She longs to be free and complete in herself. She finds dominant Akka, and her family, a great hindrance to achieve her goal. When at college, Akka didn't let her meet the boys and cultivate friendship with them. Later

she leaves her house and marries Jayant, a man of her choice. She leaves her parental house and enters the house of her husband to achieve freedom and completeness but soon realise the futility of her doings and decisions: "Jayant and I..I wish I could say we have achieved complete happiness. But I cannot Fantasize"(RS,14) she speaks about her own incomplete status:

This is my real sorrow that I can never be complete in myself. Until I had met Jayant. I had not known it... that was somewhere out side me, a part of me without which I remained incomplete. Then I met Jayant and lost the ability to be alone (RS, 34) Indu mocks at the idea of not calling one's husband by his names as it shortens his age. Later, she realises that she too is not different from other women. The only difference is her thinking so. After her marriage, she did what her husband liked. She herself says:

> "When I look in the mirror. I think of Jayant, when I undress I think of him. Always what he wants what he would like, what would please him. And I can't blame him. It is not he who has pressurized me into this. It is the way I want it to be.. .Have I become fluid, with no shape, no form of my own(RS,54)

It appears that marriage has taught her lesson of deception and its high-sounding: " Her desire to assert herself had driven her from affection to hypocrisy"(RS,33) Indu herself feels: "I had learnt to reveal to Jayant nothing but what he wanted to see...I hid my response as if they were bits of garbage" (RS,41). All these touching facts of loosing her identity into her husband's frighten her. Gradually, Indu found that Jayant had not merely expected her to submit but had taken her submission for granted and she also, without being aware of it, submitted herself to him step by step on the altar of love. When she met the reality, she found it was not love but an adjustment, as she never wanted strife in her married life. She bears

everything only to show her victory over her parents. She wanted to prove her success in life.

Indu resented all this suppression. She had been told that "there had to be if not the substance, at least the shadow of submission", but she had laughed off, for her English education had set her apart from her family. She had sworn that she would never be a hypocrite and so she had been rebellious since birth. Indu had thought that womanhood was a beautiful world, but it was thrust upon her so brutally and harshly that she had received a rude shock and started resenting the fact that she was a woman. She left her family in resentment and went to a girls' hostel, only to hate the utter feminity that prevailed there. She even hated working on a woman's magazine, and when she did write in it, it was the borrowed attitude of a man.

Indu had always been choosy about her affections but when she met Jayant, she knew that he was the only man for her. It was she who proposed to him and married him which was another way of fighting her womanhood as R.A. Singh has remarked:

> "Shashi Deshpande's who seeks anchorage in marriage they perceive it as an alternative to the bond imposed by the parental family and opt for it they are caught they are caught in the conflict between responsibility to one's self and conformity to the traditional role of wife however they do not accept to considered objects of gratification they challenge victimisation and seek balance of power between the sexes".(RAS, CSIF,127)

The pathetic predicament:

> " The hideous ghost of my own cowardice confronted me as I thought of this... that I had clung tenaciously to Jayant, to my marriage, not for alone, but because I was afraid of failure, I had to show them that my marriage, that I was a success. And so I went on lying, even to myself

Here the novelist presents a veritable state of women in which modern women are bound to live between tradition and modernity. Indu mocks the very word 'love': I love a book, a word, or a sari, a curry, a child, a man"(RS,97) The experience that love has no place in her life drives her to the extreme stance of seeing only stratagem and betrayal, all around. She again feels how sex becomes an emblem of power and authority. Marriage proves to be another trap and woman feels like a caged animal. Indu doesn't believe in love. There is no love in her real life.

Thus Indu willingly surrendered herself to Jayant even before he pressurized her to do so. She only thought about what he wanted what he liked and what would please him. It was as if they were onto different planes and she chose her plane accordingly. That too puzzled her to realise that she who had considered herself to be so independent, intelligent, clever who had been so proud of her logical and rational thinking. She who had been all set out to reform Indian womanhood has fallen into the trap waiting for her. Indu felt that basically she was like the women in' her family for her to have lost her identity like them. She felt ashamed of her feelings for her husband for she now realised that she could never be complete in herself living another human being brought only pain to oneself became totally dependent she had always wanted to assert herself to grow and flourish regardless of what was destroyed in the bargain. Indu even wanted to get off leaving J ayant and living alone for that seemed to be the only way of becoming her self.

Indu felt uneasy not only about marriage but also about waiting for it. It had been ages since she really wanted to for a long time to write. what her editor said and what was acceptable to the public did not matter to her. She had written about how man lies in the bargain. When she voiced her doubts to Jayant she got the answer that one person can not change the whole system, therefore, there was now point in making herself an object

of ridicule with useless gestures and also giving in her resignation was no solution for they needed the money, and had a long way to go. Indu could not understand why they were going through a dull life spreading out endlessly ahead of her but she woke up every day trapped in a feeling of hate for herself, for her helplessness Y.S.Sunita Reddy has aptly remarked" ..... through this incident, Shashi Deshapande highlights the plight of the so called educated women still bound firmly by the shackles of tradition and convention"(YSS,SNM,77)

It also worried Indu to realise that she had deserted her family only to become a part of the success oriented society. She now belonged to the smart young set but was often depressed by a sense of fertility. She and Jayant did not have any real facts; they only had the right contacts that have the people they know thinking about the hollowness of there lives. Indu says

> "We are rational, unprejudiced, broad minded. We discuss intelligently, even solemnly, the problems we scorn the corrupt, we despise the ignorant, we hate the wicked. ... .And our hearts bleed, never, for Vietnam, for the blacks, for the Harijans... but frankly, we don't care a damn. Not one goddamn about anything but our own precious selves our own precious walled in selves". (RS, 93)

Indu now regrets that she had left her family for this hypocritical life. Her mother had died giving birth to her, but the family had never let her feel mother less. Indu felt that her wish to assert herself had stemmed from hypocrisy and assurance. This led to depression which even Jayant could not understand or remove.

T. Ashok Rani says, "Indu Views marriage as a gateway to freedom and marries Jayant, a man of her choice defying her authoritarian family"(BP,IWN, 127). Although there are no direct references to love marriage, we do get some sense of Indu and Jayant's marriage from the conversation:

> "Can I massage your head, Atya? I've become an expert now. Jayant has headaches like you. Then I have to sit and massage his head like this until he goes off to sleep." I felt her hand on my wrist for a second. " Are you happy with him, Indu?

"Happy? Who can say that? I know I can't be without him".

" How glad I am, Indu, it's all right. I can remember Akka saying. 'such marriage never work. Different caste, different languages...it' s all right for a while. Then they realise ... "(RS,67-68)

Akka is the eldest and the guardian of the family. She does not approve of Indu's marriage with Jayant. Nor do any of the family members dare approve and invite them. Akka believe that" love marriage" do not work. Love marriage could involve" different caste" and perhaps" different languages". Akka is an important person in the family. Kaka is also afraid of Akka and does not invite Indu with her husband after their marriage.

Akka made Indu her legal heir and also the head of the family. Therefore, kaka asks Indu how she feels returning to the family which did not even invite her husband for the first " Divali" after their marriage.

Indu marries Jayant who comes from a joint family but decides to live as a nucleus family after marriage. She marries him without her parents consent. However, she later on moves from a nucleus family to a joint family again as she has been made an heir to Akka's family, financial power in a joint family system is very crucial. Even "educated" women are willing to run a joint family provided they are given financial power as we see from two examples, one of Geeta in *Inside the Haveli* and the other of Indu in this novel. Why does Indu accept the responsibility? Did she not go against the system when she was part of it? Was she not against the system when she married Jayant? Why this duality? Why this opportunism?.

It can be called as guiltless relationship because nowhere does Indu feel that she is wrong in having an affair with Naren. There is a reason why she is involved in an affair with Naren. Jayant is like any other male figure having a typical patriarchal attitude. He tries to control Indu in every aspect. Indu surrenders totally to Jayant. When she is feeling unhappy with her conjugal life she is made heiress to the whole property. Thus she gets an opportunity to be away from Jayant. She accepts the responsibility and stay there. As she is alone in Akka's house, she develops an intimate relationship with Naren.

At this critical time, Indu received summons from Akka 10 years after she had left home and was not sure whether she wanted to go to back. Jayant also discouraged her from doing so. However, it was only when she reached her parental home that she released how much it meant to her. For the 'past' it had never really left her mind and now she easily slid back into the old ways. She felt so comfortable and so much at home that she released that this was where she belonged and not to the success. Oriented society she had left behind with jayant. She had felt lonely and totally out of less there for she and Jayant had drawn sort of magic circle around them and had become self-centred on the other hand, life in family was very simple professionally the same, meals and rituals forming the centre, surrounded by the penumbra of unimportant activities of which gossip was the chip one. Since there was no tension, the word relax had no meaning.

However, soon Indu wished that she had listened to Jayant's advice and not come back, for Akka died, choosing her as heiress and leaving Indu all the money and jewellery. This was a very big and unwanted responsibility for Indu as she had always wanted to be completely detached and not involved with the family, as Naren had been. Indu found herself in an unenviable position for there were so many people and all of them wanted her to do different things. Till now kaka had been

running the house with Akka's help but now he wanted Indu to help him.

There were so many people who needed Indu's help. Firstly, there was Naramda Atya, who had been widowed in her childhood and for whom this house was the only security. Secondly, there was Sunanda Atya who had an irresponsible and jobless husband. Kaka and the other family members wanted Indu to sell the house in order to pay for mini's mar un-intelligent. However, for Kaka it was enough that he was physically fit. Mini had also agreed to the marriage because she did not want her family to face more tension in looking for suitable boys for her.

Finding herself in a state of dilemma Indu was tempted to follow Jayant's advice, who had written to her that there was no need to involve herself in other people's problem after all. None of the family members had even bothered to find out whether she was dead or alive in past ten years. It would be best to leave them to their fate and come back to him. Indu had the choice of selling the house or continuing to live there and pursue her writing.

As all these possibilities were going through her mind Indu also had the opportunity to reconsider relationship with her husband try to pin-point what was missing in her marriage. At the same time she was greatly attracted towards Naren who was a challenge for her. He was also attracted towards her and she gives herself to him twice but very next day her mind was in turmoil of matters of sin, crime, right and wrong. Indu did not lack love making actually. She had cheated on him even before pretending to be what she was not. Indu had never believed in love for she thought if someone believed in it. Become the material instinct. Self love and self-interest were the basic truths.

On other hand, she does not take love making as a sin or crime but on the other hand, she does not think of what she has done:

> "Adultery.. What nuances of wrong doing, of sin the word carries. I will now brood on my sin and be crushed under a weight of my guilt and misery" (RS, 170).

Again, her mind on the facts of sin, crime, right and wrong can be found in the novel:

> "Wronging Jayant? I wished at the thought. But had I not wronged Jayant even before this? By pretending, by giving him spurious coin instead of the genuine kind? I had cheated him of my true self. That I thought dishonourable, dishonest much more than this what I have done with Naren"(RS, 188).

Indu wants to be detached and free but it goes in vain. She feels ashamed of herself and tells Naren:

> ...When you tried to me, I thought... this is Jayant. So that's all I'm Naren. Not a pure woman. Not a too Faithful wife. But as an anachronism. A woman who loves her husband too much, too passionately and is ashamed of it (RS, 192).

She is also ashamed of herself for not being a virgin women. Therefore, she hates her womanhood. After realizing her married life, she looks down upon marriage as a trap:" A trap? Or a cage?..a cage with two trapped animals glorying hatred at each other".(RS,67) This sheds a brilliant light on Indu's awareness of her autonomy and her realization that she is a being, and not a dependent on Jayant. She fights to know the life in reality. She feels the presence of Jayant. When Indu tries to talk of much feeling to him, he would call it only 'nonsense' and nothing else. Jayant never tries to understand her and her feelings. Thus, there is no real communication between them:

> "Love, that's word I don't really understand. It seems to me an overworked word... sometime I wonder if I will leave him... the only way in which I can be, myself, my whole self again"(RS,97)

As a consequence of it, instead of leaving Jayant, she goes back to him with the vain hope that things will change the situation:

> " ... go back to Jayant. What kind of a life can you build on a foundation of dishonesty.. .Now I would go back and see that home could stand the scorching touch of honesty? Nevertheless, I Knew I would not tell Jayant about Naren and me"(RS,205)

According to Jasbir Jain, Indu's " ..adulterous relationship does not lead to a sense of guilt, instead it liberates the psyche from false restrictions"(15-l6). I do not agree with Jain's theory of "liberating the psyche from false restriction". In another context, Jain in her article "Positioning the Post in Post Feminist: Reworking of strategies" says: " When Indu has a physical relationship with Namdra, it is not infidelity to her husband, nor is it an involvement with him; it is merely the use of something she owns, in order to show that she cares for him as a human being(88). How can anyone bring in the "physical relationship" with someone other than the husband and defend the women's sexual acts as "something she owns" and call it "caring for him as a human once or more than once, she is definitely called" infidel." "Indu suffers no guilt in her extramarital relationship with Naren and decides not to tell Jayant about it" (RS,125). No guilt in Indu is something that it cannot digest in a married woman. The same applies to married man too. One can fight against "false restrictions" but not a guiltless affair. What happens if men also think in Indu's manner? Will there be any respect to the institution of marriage? Look at the total surrender of her body to Naren.

Indu participates in this affair with so much passion. As a result of this affair she is "filled" with "ecstasy in her body". She calls it a joyous sense of release and she could experience, passion and participate in it without

any guilt. She even thanks Naren for the affair, indicating that she has no feeling of guilt. She finds in herself an intense desire for activity. Naren even compares her happiness to a bird smoothing its ruffled feathers. Naren happens to be her childhood friend. That does not mean she can use this opportunity of living apart from her husband due to the compulsion of protecting the property of her ancestors and safeguarding it to have an affair. She does not feel any kind of guilt whatsoever.

Indu does have a job before she becomes the heir to Akka's property. Indu has had to choose her career out of force and compulsion. She marries Jayant without her parents consent. In order to support her family expenditure she has undertaken to write stories for a magazine. She is a creative writer unlike Simrit who is a freelance writer and who authors a book on the river. There is a difference between simrit and Indu in the sense that the former writes for self-satisfaction and the latter writes for money. Indu expresses her views on writing thus:

> "I no longer have any desire to mould people, to change them, to reform society. There is only one thing I know I can do..! can write.." (RS, 15).

Indu asserts that she has no desire in reforming the society through her writings. While writing she also feels tired and goes to extent of wanting to abandon her writing.

Here one can see Indu's failure as her new efforts are also rooted in adultery and dishonesty. She is always in a chaotic state of psyche and combating with the circumstances to reach a final solution. Indu has confronted to her real self and she knows her roots, she need not be ashamed of her body and sexual needs; she has to decide what her job will be; she is capable of taking decisions not only for herself but for others too, and life does not come to an end with individuals, be it Indu or Jayant.

According to Indu one should listen to the dictates of one's own conscience and be true to one-self in speech and action. As O.P. Bhatnagar has commented: "in the end comes the realisation that freedom lies in having the courage to do what one believes is the right thing to do and the determination and the tenacity to adhere to it."(OPB,IW,22) But unfortunately She herself had failed to do so either for fear of failure or because of timidity. The very pact made her see herself as a sinner and deceiver and become a cause of her sufferings. As Indu thought over all this she suddenly realised what was lacking in her marriage, she had given into Jayant. Not because she loved him. But simply because she wanted to avoid any conflict. So that her family would feel that her marriage was successful. That is why she had lied and compromised all along losing her identity in the process. Indu who had proudly thought that she would never pretend had actually pretended before Jayant her own husband by not revealing her whole self to him. But only what he wanted to see. This way she had wronged not only Jayant and Naren. But herself too.

Earlier, Indu had thought that she wanted detachment and non-involvement, but it was Naren who made her realise that this was not so. Naren's own detachment made him possible to remain unaffected by anything. Since he could not be anyone's husband or lover, he remained untouched when Indu rejected him. Indu realised that Jayant would be shattered if she were to reject him and this is what made him so precious to her. She did not want detachment and non-in-evolvement; it was for the dead and not the living. Also, Naren loved music to such an extent that he could completely lose himself in it. This made Indu realise that there was nothing wrong in her need of Jayant for it did not make her any less of a human being. Love was not a restricting but a uniting bond and life meant depending on each other. The only way in which she could bring harmony in her married life was to stop pretending and to reveal her whole self, her weaknesses and her strength, her virtues and voices.

Thus, not only in *Roots and Shadows,* but in her other novels as well Shashi Deshpande has employed withdrawal as a tool for both introspection and self-realisation for her protagonists. These characters withdraw, not into a world of fantasy but into a world away from the suffocating circumstances of their lives. Unable to adjust to the social demands on them, they attempt a temporary psychological as well as sociological withdrawal. In the fonner, they probe into their inner psyche and attempt to understand their personality, their hidden strengths and their potential. As Seema Jena says: "...the technique of withdrawal becomes a means by which a woman rediscovers her personality and digs up her hidden potential not to repress her talents." (JSWND,28) In sociological withdrawal - they acquire freedom and ensure a place for themselves in both family and society. Each protagonist is able to view her future more positively only after delving into her past experiences and rethinking past ideas and attitudes.

All of a sudden Indu's vision becomes clear and she knows what she has to do. Until now she had thought of Akka as being an interfering old woman but, she now realises that Akka had been a pillar of strength, she had acted according to her beliefs and had let nothing come in her way. She had chosen Indu as her heiress because she believed that Indu was capable of showing the same indomitable courage and strength, and become a pillar like herself. Indu had to fulfil her obligations and responsibilities, putting aside all her thoughts. Whatever freedom she wanted, she had to find within the bounds of her obligations and responsibilities for rules and grace and dignity to life and within them one is free to do what one wants.

Shashi Deshpande has very exquisitely pin-pointed the inner struggles and sufferings of the new class of Indian women through the character of Indu who has raised many basic questions regarding modern women who are tooted and shaped by the Indian customs but

influenced by the scientific knowledge of the West. There was a time when the Indian woman was hailed as a "Pativrata", a "Sati", and some one who has to be protected by a women, but now she is a changed person who is aware of the stirrings of her conscience, her quest her identity her individuality her place and role in the family and society. Indu represents this woman. And now the question before the society is whether to reject and condemn her or to encourage and co-operate with her in her efforts to establish a new image.

Indu also felt that old house was like a trap. It had already outlived its entire life and she had to come out of it, even if it meant selling it. Undoubtedly, it was a very painful decision for her, for four generations of the family had lived in it and every corner could tell its own story about the various inmates. For some time Indu was overcome by a sense of bereavement and desolation but she knew that she should not let her heart rule her brain. The house had lived a clean life and deserved a clean end. One era ends so that the other can begin but life will continue endless, limitless, formless and full of grace.

Deshpande generally has the female protagonist as the narrator, and employs a kind of stream-of-consciousness technique. Almost all her novel deal with crisis in the heroine's life. The narrative goes back and forth in time, so the narrator can describe events with the benefit of hindsight. Her work is women-oriented, but it would not be correct to term her a feministic, because there is nothing doctrinaire about her fiction; she simply portrays, in depth, the meaning of being a woman in modern India.

Through the protagonist's conscious-raising voice, struggling to assert her feminity, Shashi Deshpande gets to the root of existence and gives vent to a kind of female subjectivity which refuses to reconcile and identify herself with patriarchal and male-dominated society. Through her female protagonists, she seems to convey the message that marital polarizations curtail human potential and individual happiness.

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